

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: STRATEGIES TO CREATE JOBS

Stable Employment and Health

Stable employment, adequate income, and access to affordable health coverage are key aspects of building financial stability and improving overall health and well-being of Coloradans. A significant and growing body of evidence has documented a strong relationship between income and health.¹ This evidence demonstrates that income not only affects our access to medical care, but has a much broader affect an individual's physical and mental health. A growing body of research demonstrates that economic policies focused on employment, such as providing wage subsidies, subsidized health insurance, and child care, may result in improved physical and mental health outcomes.²

There is a demonstrated relationship between income and health for both children and adults.³ Children in poor families are about seven times as likely to be in poor or fair health as children in families with incomes at or above 400 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Research also shows that rates of low birth weight (which has been linked to development of chronic conditions later in life) are highest among infants born to low-income mothers. Lower-income children also experience higher rates of asthma, heart conditions, hearing problems, digestive disorders, and elevated blood lead levels.

Low-income adults also face disparities in health. Adults below the poverty line are nearly five times as likely to report being in poor or fair health as adults with family incomes at or above 400 percent FPL, and more than three times as likely to have activity limitations due to chronic illness. Adults with higher incomes can also expect to live longer than their poorer counterparts.

Income and wealth can influence health through multiple pathways. These include:⁴

Access to health-promoting goods and services: Greater economic resources increase people's access to elements that help prevent illness, such as nutritious food, exercise friendly environments, safe neighborhoods, and medical care.

Psychosocial effects linked with economic resources and occupation: The work environment is an important psychosocial factor shown to affect health, with significant differences across occupations. Lower-paid workers often experience increased chronic stress and associated negative health impacts. Research has found a relationship between factors such as work load demands, workers' perceived sense of control over their performance, safety stressors, work organization, and work atmosphere, and increased risk for hypertension, diabetes, upper extremity musculoskeletal back problems, and cardiovascular disease.⁵

Cumulative effects over time and at critical periods: Health may also be shaped by cumulative economic hardships over the course of a person's life. One study that followed individuals over

¹ "Income, Wealth, and Health: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health," *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*, 2011 http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70448 (Note: income and wealth encompass a person's overall economic resources; wealth specifically refers to a person economic assets accumulated over time.)

² Theresa L. Osypuk et al., "Do Social and Economic Policies Influence Health? A Review," *Current Epidemiology Reports*, 2014, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40471-014-0013-5>

³ "Income, Wealth, and Health: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health," *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*, 2011 http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70448

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Work Stress and Health and Socioeconomic Status," American Psychology Association, <http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/factsheet-wsh.pdf>

the course of three decades suggested combined financial hardships affect a range of health-related outcomes including physical and cognitive functioning, psychological well-being, diabetes, and mortality. There may also be certain critical periods in life when economic adversity has a particularly powerful psychosocial impact, such as during pregnancy, or from ages birth to five.

Limited educational opportunities: Children in economically disadvantaged families grow up with more limited educational opportunities, which diminishes their opportunities for higher paying jobs and good health as adults.

Economic Opportunity in Colorado

As of April 2017, Colorado's unemployment rate reached a record low of 2.3 percent, the lowest rate in the nation, and well below the national average of 4.4 percent.⁶ The state's unemployment rate has decreased steadily over the past few years, down from 4.2 percent and 3.3 percent in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Colorado also established a state minimum wage of \$9.30 per hour in 2017, (\$6.28 per hour for tipped employees), which rises .90 cents annually until it reaches \$12 per hour in 2020.⁷ Although Colorado's statewide unemployment rate is low, it varies by region and by education level. Coloradans without a college degree experience a 4.2 percent unemployment rate and lower paying jobs.⁸

Colorado's racial and ethnic composition is shifting, with a projected 50 percent balance between white and current minority populations by 2050. This shift is significant due to the disparities in education levels between the now majority white (non-Hispanic) adult populations and adult Hispanic, black, and Native American populations. Nationwide, 54 percent of non-Hispanic white adults have a college degree, while only 21 percent of Hispanic adults have a college degree. Key workforce development strategies must therefore address these disparities in education levels and student success to ensure a workforce that is equipped for living wage jobs.⁹

Colorado's top three occupations by employment include office and administrative support (\$17.79 average hourly rate), sales and related occupations (\$20.01 average hourly rate), and food preparation and services (\$10.86 average hourly rate). Employment in these occupations account for approximately one-third of the over 2.8 million employed individuals in Colorado. A ten-year projection to assess emerging demand occupations shows that the top ten occupations will remain the same, with the most significant job increases anticipated for health care practitioners and technical occupations (24 percent increase) and healthcare support occupations (28 percent increase). Table 1 presents an overview of employment by occupation for all employed individuals in the state, and projected increases over the next ten years.

⁶ "Colorado Employment Situation April 2017." *Colorado Department of Labor and Employment*, 2017
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/news/colorado-employment-situation-april-2017>

⁷ "2017 Colorado State Minimum Wage." *Colorado Department of Labor and Employment*, 2017
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/minimumwage> (Note: If an employee's tips combined with the employer's cash wage of at least \$6.28 per hour do not equal the minimum hourly wage, the employer must make up the difference in cash wages.)

⁸ "Colorado Talent Pipeline Report." *Colorado Workforce Development Council*, 2016
https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/17-0109_2016_CO_Talent_Pipeline_Report_1.pdf

⁹ *Ibid.*

Table 1. Colorado Employment by Occupation

Description	2015 Jobs	Average Hourly Earnings	Percent of Total Employed	Projected 2015-2025 Percent Increase
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	404,319	\$17.69	14.37%	17%
Sales and Related Occupations	301,268	\$20.01	10.71%	12%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	246,634	\$10.86	8.77%	20%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	177,839	\$34.85	6.32%	18%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	166,191	\$19.88	5.91%	19%
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	153,574	\$23.48	5.46%	20%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	146,114	\$18.06	5.19%	18%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	136,515	\$37.38	4.85%	24%
Management Occupations	135,926	\$49.14	4.83%	16%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	111,948	\$11.97	3.98%	17%
Production Occupations	107,307	\$17.63	3.81%	19%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	105,581	\$22.08	3.75%	21%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	104,314	\$11.73	3.71%	14%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	101,476	\$41.75	3.61%	15%
Healthcare Support Occupations	71,779	\$15.03	2.55%	28%
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	60,648	\$41.50	2.16%	18%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	57,105	\$21.62	2.03%	15%
Protective Service Occupations	56,492	\$21.97	2.01%	14%
Military occupations	53,971	\$15.88	1.92%	(0%)
Community and Social Service Occupations	42,011	\$22.55	1.49%	19%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	31,306	\$33.96	1.11%	19%
Legal Occupations	25,732	\$45.08	0.91%	19%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	15,593	\$13.58	0.55%	9%
Total	2,813,641		100.00%	

Source: Colorado Workforce Development Council (2016) ¹⁰

The 2016 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report identified a “Top Jobs” list for Colorado based on high demand, high growth jobs that pay a living wage. This includes both a family earnings tier (living wage for a family of three) and an individual earnings tier (living wage for an individual).¹¹ The family earnings tier includes occupations in engineering, healthcare practitioners, business and finance, and information technology; the individual earnings tier includes occupations within skilled trades, healthcare support, office and administrative support, and education and social services (see Table 2).

¹⁰ “Driving Colorado Forward Together: Colorado’s Combined Plan for Execution of Workforce Development Activities.” Colorado Workforce Development Council, 2016 https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/17-0321_CO_WIOA_State_Plan.pdf

¹¹ “Colorado Talent Pipeline Report.” Colorado Workforce Development Council

Table 2. Top Jobs in Colorado – High Demand, High Growth, Living Wage (2013-2023)

Families Earnings Tier, Occupation Examples <i>Jobs with a living wage for a family of three with one child and one working adult (\$22.90/hour)</i>
Engineering (e.g., civil engineers, mechanical engineers, computer hardware engineers, electrical engineers)
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (e.g., registered nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants, dental hygienists)
Business and Finance (e.g., accountants and auditors, market research analysts/marketing specialists, cost estimators, training and development specialists)
Information Technology (e.g., software developers, computer user support specialists, computer systems analysts, network/computer systems administrators)
Individual Earnings Tier, Occupation Examples <i>Jobs with a living wage for an individual (\$11.33/hour)</i>
Skilled Trades (e.g., electricians, construction equipment operators, plumbers, carpenters)
Healthcare Support (e.g., nursing assistants, home health aides, medical assistants, licensed practical nurses)
Office & Administrative Support (e.g., customer service representatives, receptions and information clerks, medical secretaries, billing and posting clerks)
Education, Social Services (e.g., teacher assistants, preschool teachers, education, guidance and vocational counselors, mental health counselors)

To analyze the emerging demand in industry sectors, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment developed a 10-year projection (2014-2024) of industry growth trends. According to this projection, the demand in the state’s current top ten industries is expected to remain the same, although several may have more significant increases in projected statewide job availability (see Table 3). Industries with the largest projected increases in numbers of jobs available include professional, scientific, and technical services (+79,478 jobs), administrative and support services (+49,498 jobs), ambulatory health care services (+49,400 jobs), specialty trade contractors (+47,124 jobs), and social assistance (+23,303 jobs).

Table 3. Top 10 Industries with Highest Projected Increase in Employment 2014-2024

Industry	2014 Estimated Employment	2024 Projected Employment	2014-2024 Annual Percent Change	Total Employment Change
Specialty Trade Contractors	92,737	139,861	4.2%	47,124
Social Assistance	49,507	72,810	3.9%	23,303
Construction of Buildings	26,388	38,627	3.9%	12,239
Ambulatory Health Care Services	112,552	161,952	3.7%	49,400
Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments	20,046	28,266	3.5%	8,220
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	196,364	275,842	3.5%	79,478
Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	6,363	8,822	3.3%	2,459

Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	22,852	31,442	3.2%	8,590
Management of Companies and Enterprises	35,334	48,130	3.1%	12,796
Administrative and Support Services	146,353	195,851	3.0%	49,498

Source: Colorado Workforce Development Council (2016)¹²

In 2016, the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) released a four-year statewide strategy for workforce development that analyzes Colorado’s current economic environment and identifies key strategies to ensure that every Coloradan has access to meaningful employment and that Colorado businesses have access to a skilled workforce. This statewide strategy was developed based on federal requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)¹³, and was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor in June 2016. This plan is the culmination of nine months of activity led by the Colorado Workforce Development Council to gather stakeholder and public input and support for strategies identified. Strategies identified by CWDC to support economic development and job creation are highlighted in the next section of this report.

Strategies to Promote Economic Opportunity at Community and Societal Levels
Small Business Preservation and Development

Small, locally-owned business can play an essential role in supporting community health. In addition to providing essential goods and services, these businesses can serve as an important source of employment for local residents. Studies have also shown that small businesses owned by people of color can be an important source of jobs for people of color, providing a key strategy for addressing unemployment disparities across racial groups. To support equitable development of urban neighborhoods, communities have created policies and programs to prevent displacement and increase opportunities for minority-owned and other small businesses to thrive as part of economic redevelopment efforts.¹⁴

In Colorado, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network works with 14 Small Business Development Centers located throughout the state to support small businesses to create and retain jobs and infuse capital into the economy. Small Business Develop Centers can have a tremendous impact on the individual communities they serve, as well as the state economy. In 2016, the SBDC Network helped client businesses add more than 3,700 new jobs and retain almost 3,100 existing jobs in Colorado. In addition, the SBDC Network assisted entrepreneurs to generate over \$122 million in capital formation to support small businesses development, including almost \$20 in capital formation for every federal grant dollar obtained, and about \$26 in capital formation for every dollar contributed by local host organizations and communities.¹⁵

Most recently, in May 2017, the Colorado SBDC Network launched the Certified Small Business Community Program to assist rural communities to attract and recruit entrepreneurs to further develop and diversify their local economies. The initiative recognizes entrepreneurs as a driving force in local economies, and their vital role in creating jobs, investing in the community, improving the quality of life,

¹² “Driving Colorado Forward Together” Colorado Workforce Development Council,

¹³ Pub.L. 113-128, February 25, 2013. 29 USC 3101 note

¹⁴ “Development Without Displacement, Development with Diversity,” 2009, Association of Bay Area Governments, <http://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/paper-cravens-et-al.pdf>

¹⁵ “Colorado Small Business Development Centers Network 2016 Annual Report.” Colorado Small Business Development Center, <http://www.coloradosbdc.org/about/annual-report>

and assisting communities in competing in the regional, national, and global economies. The initiative will support selected communities in developing clear strategic growth and action plans aimed at diversifying the local/regional economy through the promotion of entrepreneurship. Participating communities will receive a designation as Certified Small Business Communities.¹⁶

Case Studies: Colorado Small Business Develop Center Network – Success Stories

The SBDC Network has fostered numerous small business success stories.¹⁷ Several examples are listed below.

- **Espinoza Consulting Services (ECS), La Jara, Colorado.** , ECS was established in 2010 to provide cultural and natural resource regulatory compliance services to local, state, and federal agencies, and commercial clients, such as engineering and environmental firms. The founder, Dee Espinoza, is a local community leader, serves as a Trustee with the Town of La Jara, and is a former board member of the Conejos County Chamber of Commerce.¹⁸ The SBDC Network assisted ECS to obtain several certifications from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) that have helped them to win a growing number of federal contracts. They are currently the only small business in the San Luis Valley that is in the SBA’s 8(a) Business Development Program, which provides socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses with an array of services to help them gain a foothold in government contracting. ECS has grown from one to 16 employees, and has opened offices in several locations, including offices in Wheat Ridge and La Jara, Colorado. This expansion has helped achieve the company’s long-time goal of bringing professional jobs into the area and helping stimulate the local economy.

- **Mariana’s Authentic Cuisine (Durango, Colorado):** In 2013, Mariana Hidayat began serving healthy, natural Indonesian food out of her mobile food cart in Durango, Colorado. The Southwest Colorado SBDC Network assisted Hidayat to understand the permits, taxes, and other requirements for doing business in LaPlata County. SBDC advisors guided Hidayat through the process of starting a business and helped address language barriers.¹⁹

- **Environmental Consulting Services (Denver, Colorado):** Jessica Acosta started Environmental Consulting Services in 2011 to provide environmental management and water quality compliance services to private, federal, state, and local clients. Acosta began her career in an entry-level construction position and advanced through the industry with the goal of owning her own business. She worked with the Denver Metro SBDC Network to obtain basic training, design a strategic business plan, and develop competitive and successful bids for contracts. Acosta has brought new jobs to the region and her company has increased business revenues annually. As the youngest member of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Denver and a 2014 member of the Denver Business Journal’s 40 under 40, Acosta strives to be an example to empower Latina women in the Denver community through her professional endeavors as well as her community

¹⁶ “Initiative: Certified Small Business Community.” *Colorado Small Business Development Center*,

<http://choosecolorado.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/blueprint-initiatives-descriptions-small-business.pdf>

¹⁷ “Success Stories.” *Colorado Small Business Development Center*, <http://www.coloradosbdc.org/about/success-stories>

¹⁸ “Espinoza Cultural Services.” *Colorado Small Business Development Center*, <http://www.coloradosbdc.org/success-stories/espinoza-cultural-services>

¹⁹ “Mariana’s Authentic Cuisine.” *Colorado Small Business Development Center*, <http://www.coloradosbdc.org/success-stories/marianas-authentic-cuisine>

involvement. Acosta credits the SBDC Network as playing a vital role in starting a successful business.²⁰

Case Study: San Mateo North B Improvement Initiative

The North B Improvement Initiative in San Mateo, California, provides an example of a successful model for supporting small businesses and advancing healthy, equitable economic development.²¹ The initiative is part of San Mateo County’s 2015-2020 strategic plan for building healthy, equitable communities, and part of a larger set of strategies that focus on the role of a healthy economy.²²

North B is a one-block strip of largely immigrant-owned small businesses near San Mateo’s downtown. Businesses include taquerias, a Peruvian grill, grocery stores, small shops, social service providers, and a community center. Rising rents and property values put North B businesses at risk of displacement. While many of the businesses had been in operation on North B for over 10 years, almost none of them owned their places of business, some had no leases, and a few had month-to-month leases, making them extremely vulnerable to displacement. In addition, many of the merchants and patrons felt unsafe in the area due to public drunkenness, and North B was considered dangerous for both pedestrians and drivers, limiting potential customers.

In considering options to redevelop North B, the City of San Mateo focused on supporting the area’s existing small businesses. The North B initiative offers several best practices for jurisdictions interested in cultivating and protecting small business corridors:

- *Build consensus and support among city leadership:* Work with city leadership to achieve consensus about project goals, including support for small business retention and anti-displacement strategies. This will help ensure appropriate resources are dedicated to the project and build trust with local merchants around development goals to preserve existing, locally-owned small businesses.
- *Provide support to local businesses before investing in an area:* Before making infrastructure improvements, communities should consider implementing anti-displacement policies and assisting businesses to develop stronger business plans, negotiate longer-term leases, and understand the city’s codes and laws. This provides businesses with a stable business plan to better navigate increasing property values and rising rents that accompany economic revitalization.
- *Conduct proactive multi-lingual outreach and trust building:* Plan for significant outreach during project conception, planning, and implementation. Partners in the North B initiative maintained a near constant presence in the area, walking it weekly to meet with merchants, and conducting over a dozen focus groups, dialogues, and educational meetings. This outreach helped define a clear merchant vision for the area and ongoing engagement to achieve this goal – a cleaner, safer North B, clearly connected to downtown San Mateo, while maintaining its own unique character.

²⁰ “Environmental Consulting Services.” *Colorado Small Business Development Center*, <http://www.coloradosbdc.org/success-stories/environmental-consulting-services>

²¹ “San Mateo’s North B Street Improvement Initiative.” *Get Healthy San Mateo County*, http://www.gethealthysmc.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/case_study_north_b_street.pdf

²² “Strategies for Building Healthy, Equitable Communities: Get Healthy San Mateo County 2015-2020,” *County of San Mateo California*, http://www.gethealthysmc.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/get_healthy_smc_strategic_plan_2015-2020_final.pdf

- *Communicate clearly and consistently:* Communicate the project’s goals and progress on a continual basis, in appropriate languages and through varied media including online, in print, and in person. This can help build momentum and establish stronger community networks.
- *Make incremental improvements:* Disinvested areas often need basic services and repairs to be clean, safe, and appealing to merchants and potential customers. Making small, incremental improvements with community participation can help build community trust, cultural character, and momentum. In North B, for example, San Mateo moved quickly to enhance the area through low-cost improvements, organizing neighborhood clean-up days, making side walk repairs, and installing new planter boxes, plants, fences for vacant lots, and banners that spoke to the character of the area. This incremental approach can help avoid dramatic shifts in property values and displacement that can accompany traditional revitalization efforts.

Talent Development Strategies

Colorado leaders have recognized that having the right mix of talent is critical to attracting higher paying industries to the state and ensuring that Coloradans have good job opportunities. Legislation has been enacted in recent years to better link education with workforce demand. In 2015, “Increasing Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness” (HB 15-1170) created a statewide postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) position shared between the CWDC and the Colorado Department of Education. The PWR coordinator works to support and leverage sector partnerships, career pathways, and work-based learning as key strategies to ensure education programs are aligned with the needs of the labor market, and improve Coloradan postsecondary education attainment.

In 2016, the Colorado General Assembly passed HB 16-1289 to help increase the number of high school graduates prepared for high demand fields or pathways toward such fields. The law provides incentives to school districts that are aligned with high demand, high growth occupations identified in Colorado’s 2016 *Talent Pipeline Report* (See Table 1). The incentives are based on the number of students who complete qualifying career and technical education programs²³

Sector Partnerships

The WIOA identified sector partnerships as a key strategy for state and local area workforce development. A sector partnership is an industry-specific regional partnership that is led by business, in collaboration with economic development, education, and workforce development and formed to address specific job growth priorities and needs. Colorado has been recognized as a national innovator in this area with the 2013 launch of the next generation approach to sector partnerships. Colorado currently has 21 active and emerging sector partnerships that engage over 450 businesses and include at least one partnership operating in every region of the state. These partnerships, representing five major industries, include the following:

- Eleven health & wellness sector partnerships
- Seven advanced manufacturing sector partnerships
- One value-added agriculture sector partnership
- One tree care (arborist) sector partnership

²³ “Colorado Talent Pipeline Report.” *Colorado Workforce Development Council*. (See report appendices for a complete list of occupations with median annual salaries, education levels, and project job openings available at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwdc/colorado-talent-pipeline-report>)

- One tourism & outdoor recreation sector partnership
- One statewide sector strategy in Information Technology

Colorado sector partnerships enable community partners from workforce, education, and economic development to align efforts to meet the needs of businesses and create greater job opportunities for students and job seekers. We offer several examples of work engaged by these partnerships.

- *The Southern Colorado Healthcare Sector Partnership* is addressing employers' high demand for nurses. Healthcare employers have increased investment in two regional nursing programs (CSU-Pueblo and Pueblo Community College) resulting in a greater number of students entering and completing nursing programs.
- *The Northern Colorado (NoCO) Manufacturing Partnership's Talent Committee* has partnered with 10 high schools and one middle school across four different school districts and two Workforce Investment Boards to inform the development of a regional career pathway map and career pathway action plan; inform curricular changes and articulation agreements; create and host a joint Career and Technical Education advisory board for local community college programs and school districts; and engage 847 students in hands on learning experiences in 49 different local manufacturing facilities over the course of a year and a half.
- *Region 5 Sector Health and Wellness Partnership* is focused on filling 89 unfilled nurse, nurse aides, and medical assistant positions in their four-county region. Their goal is to train 40 people in two years.

Career Pathways Development

Colorado is supporting the development of industry-driven career pathways to ensure that education, training, and workforce systems are aligned with and responsive to the needs of the labor market, and effectively prepare Coloradans with the education needed to take advantage of living wage and higher-paying job opportunities. Like sector partnerships, the federal WIOA recognized career pathways as a key strategy for state and local area workforce development. To support the development of pathways, the U.S. Department of Labor also released a federal career pathways development toolkit.²⁴

A career pathway program outlines a clear sequence of credits and credentials, combined with support services, that enables students and jobseekers to advance to higher levels of education and employment in high demand occupations in Colorado. Tools like career pathway maps can be used to talk with students and job seekers about how they can progress through education and training to obtain employment that meets their goals.²⁵

The Colorado statewide career pathway system aligns career pathway programs with high demand industries across the state. Colorado's sector partnerships provide a forum for developing career pathways and supporting ongoing collaboration between industry, workforce, education, training, and other community partners.

In addition to industry-led career pathway development efforts, in 2016, the CWDC coordinated the development of the first statewide career pathways maps required by 2015 legislation (HB 15-1274).

²⁴ "Career Pathways Toolkit: An Enhanced Guide and Workbook for System Development," 2017, *U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration*,

https://careerpathways.workforcegps.org/announcements/2016/10/20/09/37/Career_Pathways_Toolkit_An_Enhanced_Guide_and_Workbook

²⁵ "Driving Colorado Forward Together" 2016. *Colorado Workforce Development Council*.

Information Technology (IT) was chosen as the first pathway due to IT occupations being in high demand and typically paying good wages. With labor market data, employer engagement, and cross-agency collaboration, the CWDC created a map of the five main IT pathways. Career pathways mapping efforts for in-demand healthcare and construction/skilled trades occupations are now underway.²⁶

Colorado has identified several key steps necessary for developing career pathways:

1. Build a regional, industry-led sector partnership.
2. Build a career pathway support team of non-industry partners.
3. Identify critical occupations based on labor market data and qualitative input from employers.
4. Inventory relevant education, training, and workforce programs.
5. Understand critical competencies required to perform effectively on the job.
6. Build career pathway programs that prepare students and jobseekers with critical competencies.
7. Share career pathway with students and jobseekers.
8. Create a system for continuous improvement.

Conclusion

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that income and economic opportunity have broad and profound effects on the physical and mental health of children and adults. Community strategies to build healthy, equitable communities will need to address economic opportunities as a critical aspect of health. These efforts will help reduce substance use, mental health concerns, chronic disease, and violence.

Colorado is already engaged in significant efforts to improve economic opportunities throughout the state. These measures include, for example, an active network of Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), as well as numerous industry-led sector partnerships that align workforce development with high demand, high growth industries that pay a living wage.

Community strategies to support economic opportunity in Colorado can build upon the state's foundation of work in this area. Every community has unique economic circumstances. Successful strategies to improve economic opportunity will require careful analysis of each community's needs, while leveraging these broader resources to improve and create living wage jobs that support community health.

²⁶ "Colorado Talent Pipeline Report." *Colorado Workforce Development Council*.