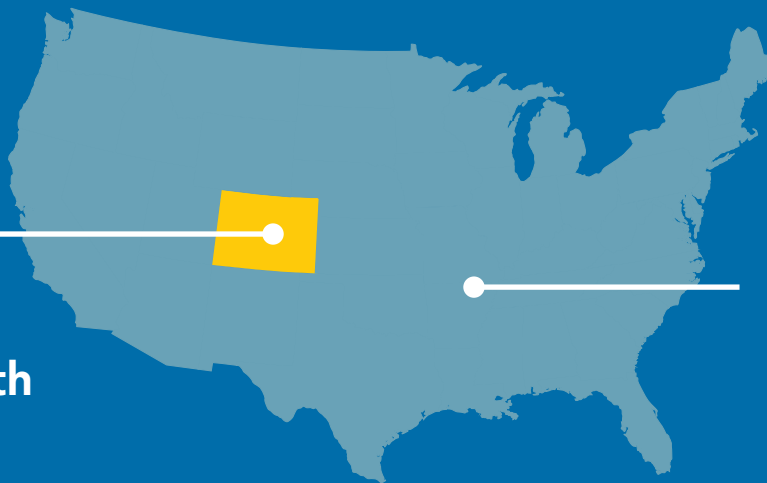


WHO ARE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH?



16 - 24 year-olds not in school or in the workforce

65,300
or 10% of
Colorado youth



5.5 million
American youth

WHY DOES THIS POPULATION MATTER?



WORKFORCE ISSUES

- In 2020, **74%** of Colorado jobs will need some post-secondary credentials
- As of 2014, just over **54%** of Coloradans had a two-year degree or higher
- Workers are exiting the workforce at a substantially higher rate than those entering
- Historic unemployment lows make hiring challenging



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- In 2016, **10,530** students in grades seven to 12 dropped out
- **12,456** students failed to complete high school
- **38%** of those who failed to complete may never attain a high school credential



ECONOMIC COST

- Annual taxpayer cost estimated at **\$13,900** for each opportunity youth
- Annual societal cost at **\$37,450** for each opportunity youth
- Total compounding costs over an average lifespan reach **\$1.5 trillion** for taxpayer burden (**\$4.75 trillion** in societal costs)

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Colorado is considered a national leader in supporting the education-to-employment pipeline, but much more needs to be done. This report finds that, among many efforts, Colorado could consider:



Evaluating existing efforts to determine best practices and needed course corrections

Opportunities include: Implementing a comprehensive analysis of existing Colorado initiatives to determine the impact.



Adopting targeted strategies to close opportunity gaps for at-risk youth

Opportunities include: Increasing or eliminating the school attendance age limit and expanding the reach of programs intended to create pipelines to the workforce by ensuring they serve youth who have already left the educational system.



Making strategic investments and financing changes for education and workforce programs

Opportunities include: Changing the student count data in the school finance act to ensure schools are paid for serving students throughout the school year.



Harnessing the power of local innovation

Opportunities include: Supporting expansion and replication of best practices within successful dual high school and college enrollment programs.



Enhancing data collection and alignment to ensure more efficient and effective service delivery

Opportunities include: Ensuring uniform data transparency requirements for all types of higher education to empower students.

These policy opportunities, coupled with ongoing urgency for existing successful policies already in place, can create a better environment for reengaging youth, while helping support the workforce needs of Colorado's economy and ensuring that generations of Colorado youth have a bright future.

The Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative, supported by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, is aimed at providing education, career opportunities and support systems to opportunity youth by partnering with nonprofit, government and business organizations to create a pipeline to meaningful work experiences and careers.