

## Denver Partnership sees real results, serves as an incubator for education-to-workforce collaborations

### DENVER PARTNERS

- Denver Public Schools
- Emily Griffith Technical College
- Community College of Denver
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- University of Colorado Denver
- Colorado Community College System
- Colorado Department of Education
- Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Colorado Workforce Development Council

### FIVE-YEAR GOAL

Dramatically increase the number and diversity of students who complete selected high-quality career pathways that start in high school, continue into and through higher education, and lead to good jobs in Denver's labor market. Forge a national model for closing equity gaps and increasing postsecondary attainment resulting in family-living wage employment.

Metro Denver has a robust economy with a near constant need for skilled workers. However, too many of the city's own high school graduates find themselves excluded from good-paying jobs in the healthcare, aerospace, construction, technology, and other thriving industries because they lack the education and skills employers need.

The result is a vast pool of diverse, talented workers left untapped by local employers. Partners in education, industry, and government convened by The Attainment Network are working to change this by aligning high school and higher education opportunities with the industry credentials and work-based learning experiences employers are looking for.

### A NEW, COORDINATED APPROACH TO PREPARING THE WORKFORCE

The way high school, higher education, and workforce training have been structured for the last century is no longer meeting the needs of our economy. Current and future workforce needs in Denver and across Colorado require institutions to break out of their silos, step beyond their routines, and shift their mindset and their actions to prepare learners for high-value, in-demand careers. Building lasting change so desperately needed in our education-to-workforce systems requires working in partnership — which is challenging, hard work for the institutions tasked with preparing workers.

The Attainment Network has served the Denver education community for several years, providing strategic direction, project management, professional development, capacity building, and additional resources to help meet their shared goal.

The Attainment Network also connects partners with critical resources and learning opportunities at the state level. These state partnerships have brought in additional resources, such as funding from the Colorado Department of Education's Career Development Incentive Program. The Attainment Network also brought in leaders at state agencies tasked with preparing learners for success in the workforce and driving economic development. These connections have allowed state policymakers to observe partnership strategies in Denver and incorporate best practices into state-level policies, laying a foundation for more effective work statewide.

## LEARNER OUTCOMES

Together, the partners have made solid progress toward expanding the number and diversity of learners who acquire real world experiences and credentials to enter careers that support families and collectively build a thriving community.

- **52% increase** in participation in industry-aligned career pathways
- **5x increase** in completion of industry-recognized credentials
- **15% increase** in participation in industry-aligned work-based learning experiences

Visit <https://attainmentnetwork.org/DenverPartnership/> to learn more about how The Attainment Network and its Denver partners are transforming education-to-workforce systems.



## STRATEGIC USE OF DATA TO DRIVE FORWARD MOMENTUM

A key factor in the partners' success has been the strategic use of data. The Attainment Network played a critical role in building the trust necessary for partners to establish data-sharing agreements in 2022 and use insights from learners' progress and outcomes to develop cohesive strategies.

The shared data is critical for informing collaborative work and building learning opportunities that start in high school and continue through higher education. The Attainment Network's expertise in using data and the tools they provide, especially the [Data Framework and Pathways Evaluation Toolkit](#), help partners establish a common grounding and improve collaborative decision making.

## INCUBATOR FOR LEARNING

The Attainment Network has leveraged insights from its work in Denver to shape the development of systems and structures in other communities struggling to meet critical workforce needs.

For example, best practices and effective resources for annual action planning — identifying what's working and what needs to be improved — have been applied in Aurora and the San Luis Valley. This planning process, along with guidance documents and templates, provides the structure for both reflection and goal-setting for the upcoming year.

In addition, the work in Denver underscored the value of including K-12 education, higher education, and employers in goal and strategy development from the onset of the partnership. In Aurora, for example, The Attainment Network engaged all key stakeholders to create feasible, coordinated strategies. This involved collaborating with district and college leadership to build awareness, understanding, and buy-in, and directly including employers in the construction and healthcare industries to fully inform career-connected learning opportunities. By collaborating closely and aligning systems, the partners are ensuring that good-paying jobs await students upon completion.

And in the San Luis Valley, school districts, higher education, and employers worked together closely to craft specific, agreed-upon outcomes, ensuring that learners and earners are prepared to step into and advance in careers that can support a family and help the entire community thrive.

The Attainment Network has also taken the data tools and other key insights from the Denver partnership into state-level conversations to inform policies advancing best practices. This includes contributions to the [1215 Task Force report](#) on blending secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning, as well as subsequent legislation promoting stackable credentials and a longitudinal data system, among other policies.