

COLORADO CAREER ADVISING REPORT

A Landscape Review of Resources and Recommendations for Building Needed Capacity

January 31, 2025*



SECTION 1

OVERVIEW

Intent

Conduct statewide assessment of existing career advising resources. Perform research and artifact scan of at least 50 different career advising resources, including professional development opportunities, training programs, conferences, state organizations, and websites. Include relevant national organizations and Colorado state agencies, informed by discussions with The Attainment Network project team. The goal is to conduct a comprehensive review of career advising resources across sectors and provide recommendations for enhancing career advising capacity in the state.

Methodology

The information and recommendations contained in this report were amassed through critical review of more than 70 artifacts and resources. Additionally, more than 25 interviews were conducted to understand the application and practical use of artifacts and resources. National organizations and products were evaluated, and the Canadian system of career navigation was also considered.

We awarded three Community Voice Grants to gain deeper insights from stakeholders and to provide implementation-level perspective from advisors, teachers, counselors, program staff, community members, and learners related to career advising activities. Findings from these initiatives provided valuable context and informed the report's analysis.

- **Arvada Chamber of Commerce and the G.R.O.W. Network:** The Arvada Chamber engaged a number of partner organizations across K-12, higher education, industry, and workforce focused on best practices for talent development. The goal was to understand program models and survey individuals who conduct career advising activities (regardless of job title) to identify common themes and opportunities for cross-systems alignment. Respondents included representatives from Cross Purpose, Front Range Community College, Jeffco Public Schools' Career Links and Career Hubs programs, MSU Denver's Manufacturing Sciences Institute and C2Hub, Project SCALE, Red Rocks Community College, Tech Talent Partnership and ActivateWork, and Westminster Public Schools' Future Center.
- **Denver Public Schools' Career and Technical Education team:** DPS CTE conducted a self-study of key functions and teams across the district to confirm current career advising offerings, highlight great work taking place, and identify additional needs for both staff and learners. This project engaged CTE, school counseling, and DPS Career Development and Higher Education Academics teams, as well as learners served by each of these programs, in discussions about training, supports, and tools to support career advising activities across the district.
- **Generation Schools Network:** GSN provided insights on the need for and benefits of an intentionally designed career advising strategy centered on the power of distributed relationships, experiences, and practices. Over the last decade, GSN has collaborated with a host of people and organizations across career advising and pathway networks in rural Colorado and along the Front Range to implement and study the benefits of this career advising model. This case study on the "distributed advising" model looks at impact and opportunities to learn from their work to date.

** Updated November 2025 to include Colorado Education Initiative and Indigo Education Company as developers of CDE's Meaningful Career Conversations and Career Advising Tools.*

Throughout this report, insights from those interviews and community voice grantees have been integrated.

Executive Summary

Career development is a well-established discipline that extends beyond job search and placement. In Colorado, many school districts, higher education institutions, and workforce centers have independently developed career advising programs, work-based learning, career training, and academic programs tailored to their learners' needs. While these initiatives provide valuable opportunities for career exploration, the lack of alignment, standardization in reporting, educator and advisor training and accountability, and program impact creates significant variation across the state. This fragmentation hampers collective learning and the refinement of career services at a statewide level.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Aligned and cohesive messaging between college and career advising, particularly within CTE programs, is essential.**

CTE and career training/advising generally should not be viewed as separate or opposed to traditional college advising — Interconnected career and college advising provides learners with a unified message about education and career pathways. This emphasizes opportunities to access postsecondary education/training during high school, how these align with and stack into further education/training, all of which are needed to be eligible for living wage jobs.

- **Close alignment of work-based learning (WBL), CTE, and traditional academic programs provides a clearer, more integrated pathway for career exploration and planning.**

Clear coordination between WBL, CTE, and traditional academics better aligns these experiences as part of cohesive career advising, leading to better outcomes and more comprehensive programs. If WBL is treated as a separate entity from CTE, this can lead to misalignment between these experiences with lack of cohesion, resulting in fragmented career conversations and a disjointed understanding of career options for learners. Limited human capacity for coordinating WBL resources and partnerships makes this alignment particularly challenging.

In higher education, institutions relying on a single advisor for both academic and career guidance must provide that individual adequate training in both areas and supplement with specialized supports to avoid limiting the depth and specification of advice learners receive. Institutions with separate academic and career advisors should ensure coordination of services, to avoid inaccurate or conflicting information and guidance.

- **Effective career advising requires up-to-date, quality resources and tools, comprehensive training, and ongoing upskilling opportunities.**

Across Colorado, the quality of career advising varies significantly based on organizational priorities and funding levels, resulting in geographic disparities in access to career guidance, with individuals in well-resourced areas receiving comprehensive support, while those in underfunded regions face inconsistent services. These disparities undermine statewide efforts to offer equitable career development and impact the long-term economic success of the workforce. Programs need access to tools and resources that provide real-time updates and specificity of regional demand, emerging trends, and holistic advising best practices to provide consistent support across demographics. Regular training and clarity on goals and outcomes support advisors in remaining up-to-speed of relevant opportunities, resources, and strategies.

- **Coordination across sectors and clear priorities that incentivize relationship building are necessary for long-term career development.**

Intentional career coaching must focus on long-term career development along with immediate job opportunities. Accountability measures that prioritize immediate job placement can conflict with opportunities to provide more intentional career coaching that incorporates individualized relationship building to understand learners' motivations, passions, and purpose, and ultimately support learners in navigating an evolving job market. Finally, in order for career advisors to seamlessly support learners as they move through and between sectors, they need to be able to build upon the learners' prior experiences and conversations. This requires coordination of care and sharing of information between sectors to provide effective, clear, and relevant career advisement.

While this report seeks to support stakeholders in defining the foundation of career advising and navigation in Colorado, it's important to note that there are many next steps after that foundation is established. Following the establishment of core structures and expectations of comprehensive and consistent career support across the state, it will be important for districts and leaders to identify specific interventions and extensions for different populations. It will also be important to differentiate supports and resources for the adult general population as they reach different milestones in their careers.

Additionally, there is great opportunity to utilize a defined foundation for career advising and navigation to support current state priorities and related initiatives, including creating a statewide longitudinal data system, updating accountability measures, integrating WBL, industry certification, and postsecondary education within and after high school, and building pathways aligned to Colorado's high-need, high-wage job opportunities. A clear and strong career advising strategy can tie together these initiatives, supporting their final development and successful implementation to "blur the lines" between K-12, postsecondary, and workforce development.

First Steps/Initial Recommendations

1. **Host Ongoing Summit/Convening** statewide and/or by region to bring together professionals in various roles and across sectors who are working with learners on college and career planning/readiness. Similar events have been facilitated by [New Skills Boston](#) and [New Skills Nashville](#). The convening should focus on building understanding, skills, and utilization of tools/resources related to best-in-class practices for career advising, connecting professionals from multiple points in the continuum to strategize on effective communication and handoffs, and better understanding the bright spots and challenges in the field. This type of engagement may be an on-going opportunity for learning and improvement at both the state and local levels.
2. **Reimagine the ICAP Process** as a core element of career planning and leverage learner data beyond high school. Next steps may include:
 - Launch statewide initiatives to promote ICAP as an essential tool for career exploration.
 - Provide comprehensive training and updated resources for counselors to enhance their ability to support learners.
 - Align ICAP frameworks and career advising across secondary and postsecondary education, and workforce development to ensure continuity and effective career planning through degree completion, upskilling, and reskilling.
 - Make ICAP data portable and transferable from secondary, postsecondary, and workforce systems through a digital wallet or an LER.

- Implement technology platforms to provide personalized, real-time career guidance.
 - Develop metrics to evaluate the impact of ICAP on learner career readiness and incentivize school districts, postsecondary institutions, workforce centers, and counselors/coaches/advisors to improve engagement.
3. **Improve monitoring, evaluation, and coordination of the data** related to conditions for advising at the state and regional levels with alignment and continuity between K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems. When done well, this infrastructure will lead to more continuity in learners' experience and aspirations with career coaching, better understanding of where Coloradans are in their career journey, and an ability to innovate and iterate at regular intervals. Examples include **Connecticut Rise** (www.ctrise.org) and **Contigo Texas** (contigoed.org). Key strategies may include:
 - Implement standardized frameworks for reporting and accountability across the state to support collective learning, program iterations, and a clear understanding of available career services and counseling/advising reach statewide. Implement standardized data tracking for career services collaborating with workforce centers and educational institutions. Ensure data-sharing agreements to support transparency and foster collaboration.
 - Standardize career-advising platform usage and develop a unified curriculum for career advising to ensure consistent training for career advising professionals, enhancing continuity and effectiveness across the state.
 4. **Improve training resources for anyone who provides career-connected advising to learners** so all professionals are trained to a minimum standard in career-specific advising. Prioritize ensuring all academic institutions and workforce centers provide high-quality, intentional, and regularly updated academic and career counseling resources. This can include career advisors trained in career development, job market trends, and industry-specific guidance similar to **MSU's Classroom to Career (C2) Hub**. Alternatively, institutions might adopt integrated strategies where a single advisor or team supports both academic and career planning for each learner, similar to the navigator model used in various districts including **Denver Public Schools**.
 - Regardless of the model or type of institution, access to updated, high-quality career advising tools, resources, and training must be a priority, with regular professional development and training available to practitioners to ensure effectiveness and impact. There must be intentionality in the model selected (portfolio of resources or a single point of contact) to support career advising so providers and those they serve are clear and competently supported.
 - State agencies and training providers can play a role in outlining a baseline framework of the priority strategies, key components, and expectations of quality career advising. Trainings and resources provided through **CDE's Meaningful Career Conversations and Career Advisor Tools** (developed by the [Colorado Education Initiative](#) in partnership with [Indigo Education Company](#)), can provide a baseline framework for the priority strategies and components of quality career advising across the state. Similarly, higher education programs training advisors and teachers can incorporate stronger career adviser training curriculum, such as the theory and practice models provided through **CSU's Counseling and Career Development M.A.** program.
 5. **Intentionally Connect K-12 Experiences with Workforce Development and Postsecondary Support** to create a unified framework that connects standard K-12, career and technical education, college advising, and career advising across secondary and postsecondary levels to allow for holistic educational and career planning. Reinforce the ICAP as a core element of

learners' career exploration and planning, ensuring they are aware of and actively involved in the process with meaningful support. Connect this plan to the systems and institutions a learner pursues after their K-12 experience to provide continuity from K-12 to career. This may include:

- Broadening the scope of the [Student Transitions Pilot](#) to iterate and facilitate the transfer of information and insights gained during the K-12 experience to postsecondary supports and structures. This will build off what has already been done in the space to better connect K-12 and postsecondary career conversations and development for learners increasing the return on investment across the continuum.

SECTION 2

In-Depth Analysis of Resources and Training for Career Counselors/Advisors

Career coaching and advising in Colorado face significant challenges due to inadequate training resources, inconsistent quality of support, and a misaligned incentive structure that prioritizes job placements over long-term career development. These systemic issues undermine efforts to equip individuals with the tools and guidance needed for sustainable career success. Addressing these gaps requires investing in technology, improving training quality, and aligning incentives to promote holistic workforce development.

Key Challenges

- 1. Insufficient Training Resources**
Existing training programs for career coaches lack real-time updates and specificity. Coaches often operate without access to current data on in-demand careers, industry growth, or emerging opportunities in Colorado's dynamic job market.
- 2. Inconsistent Quality of Training**
Variability in training quality, particularly across populations served, creates disparities in career guidance. Vulnerable or underrepresented groups are disproportionately affected and receive less comprehensive support.
- 3. Misaligned Incentive Structures**
Current funding structures and connected metrics, particularly through WIOA, lack of incentives for career coaching shifts the focus toward immediate job placement rather than comprehensive career planning. This short-term approach limits the potential for sustainable workforce success.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. **Develop Adaptive Technology for Tailored Guidance**
Invest in AI-powered or adaptive Learning Management Systems (LMS) to enhance career coaching. These tools should allow advisors to input job seekers' profiles and generate customized, up-to-date career guidance. This approach ensures relevant, data-driven support aligned with Colorado's evolving workforce needs.
2. **Standardize and Expand Career Coach Training**
Implement statewide benchmarking to professionalize career coaching, ensuring consistent training quality. Expand access to training resources, leveraging programs like the **Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF)** and **Rework America Alliance's Foundational Career Coach Skills Training** to equip coaches with essential skills and knowledge. Trainings and resources provided through **CDE's Meaningful Career Conversations and Career Advisor Tools**, (developed by the [Colorado Education Initiative](#) in partnership with [Indigo Education Company](#)), can provide a baseline framework for the priority strategies and components of quality career advising across the state.
3. **Incentivize Career Coaching**
Establish incentive structures for workforce centers and organizations to prioritize career coaching alongside job placements. These incentives should reward organizations for providing high-quality, holistic career guidance, fostering long-term workforce readiness. This includes looking closely at WIOA and other funding structures to understand any flexibility in services that workforce centers provide.

Promising Models and Resources

- **Radicle Coaching:** Provides individual and group coaching training; utilized by the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC).
- **Rework America Alliance (JFF):** Offers free foundational training (~20 hours) for career coaches.
- **Goodwill Career Coach Certificate:** Develops career navigation skills for aspiring coaches.
- **National Career Development Association (NCDA):** Offers certifications, conferences, and credentials to standardize career development practices.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
Conferences/ Education/ Credentials/ Resources for coaches	National Career Development Association	Trainings, conferences, and credentials
	Career Development Facilitator	Basic facilitator course offered through NCDA often cited as what should be the minimum requirement for career coaches
	Colorado Career Development Association	Trainings, conferences, and credentials

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
Conferences/ Education/ Credentials/ Resources for coaches, cont.	Meaningful Career Conversations	Template and training for anyone interested in being a career advisor (developed by the Colorado Education Initiative in partnership with Indigo Education Company)
	Colorado Career Advising	Resources for individuals and career advisers (developed by the Colorado Education Initiative in partnership with Indigo Education Company),
	Connecting Colorado	Part of a state- and county-run system that delivers immediate, tangible results for both job seekers and employers.
	We Train Life Coaches	CO specific overview of how to become a certified career coach
	Rework America Alliance (JFF)	Foundational Career Coach Skills Training — Free, ~20-hour training for career coaches
	Career Coach Certifications	WCI Certified Career Coach, NCDA Certified Career Services Provider, ICF Career Coach Certification, PARW/CC Certified Professional Career Coach, NACE Coaching Certification Program
	Professional Association of Resume Writers and Career Coaches	Membership organization providing certifications, education, and training
	Inside Track	Coaching programs and certifications for individuals and organizations
	Radicle Coaching	Individual and group coaching as well as coaching training — employed by CWDC to train career coaches and navigators
	Goodwill Career Coach and Navigator Professional Certificate	Skills for individuals interested in career navigation
	Global Career Development Facilitator	Domestic and international credential
	Coalition for Career Development Center	National think-tank and technical assistance organization focused on holistic career readiness; largely centered in Boston

SECTION 3

In-Depth Analysis of K-12 Resources

Colorado's school districts have shown commendable initiative in developing work-based learning (WBL) and career advising programs tailored to learner needs. These efforts provide valuable opportunities for learners to engage with the world of work and explore potential career paths. However, significant inconsistencies in program implementation, reporting, and educator training hinder collective progress and limit the programs' potential to fully support academic and career development for all Colorado learners.

Key Challenges

- 1. Inconsistent Reporting and Accountability**
The independent design of career programs across districts results in wide variation in how their reach and impact are measured. This lack of standardization limits opportunities for statewide learning and the refinement of program models. Initiatives like **Jeffco Career Links**, **St. Vrain Valley**, and **Cherry Creek Innovation Campus** excel locally but highlight the need for cohesive statewide strategies.
- 2. Underutilization of ICAP Process**
While the **Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)** is a mandated process to guide learners in career exploration, it is often inadequately and inconsistently implemented. Counselors, already stretched thin, struggle to provide meaningful support and follow-up to every learner. This results in many learners not being effectively engaged in the ICAP process, lacking understanding of the purpose and how it supports them to reach their postsecondary and career goals.
- 3. Platform and Curriculum Fragmentation**
Districts employ a variety of platforms for career and college readiness, creating challenges in tracking outcomes and sharing best practices. The absence of a standardized curriculum or assessment for career advising capacity results in uneven support for educators and learners as shared through **DPS'** in-depth review.
- 4. Misalignment Between Career and Postsecondary Advising**
Career advising, particularly as part of secondary CTE, that is disconnected from postsecondary advising creates barriers to holistic career guidance. This issue often results in learners perceiving career and college advising as opposing rather than complementary paths.
- 5. Sparse Integration of Work-Based Learning with Career Advising**
Integration of WBL with career advising remains limited due to a lack of consensus on implementing high-quality WBL experiences and insufficient resources. Programs such as the **Greeley-Evans D6 Career Explore Internship Program** offer robust WBL opportunities and connected career exploration.

Recommendations for Improvement

- 1. Standardize Reporting and Accountability**
Develop statewide frameworks to measure and report the impact of career advising programs, including the integration of career preparation experiences such as WBL, concurrent enrollment, and industry certifications. This will enable districts to collaborate, share insights, and improve service delivery.
- 2. Reimagine the ICAP Process**
Related to above, ensure that ICAP is treated as a core element of learners' career planning with measures to increase learner awareness and engagement. Additional training and resources for counselors are crucial to make the process impactful. Expand ownership of the ICAP process beyond counselors to include all professionals involved in the support and education of learners to ensure implementation and integration.
- 3. Unify Platforms and Curricula**
Encourage districts and provide resources to adopt shared platforms and develop a common curriculum for career advising. Programs like **Naviance** and **YouScience** provide scalable tools that can foster consistency.
- 4. Bridge Secondary and Postsecondary Alignment**
Create frameworks to integrate CTE, career advising, and college planning across educational levels. Messaging should emphasize their interconnectedness, and practices such as dual credit enrollment should be expanded to ensure seamless transitions. Consider how ICAP data could be made accessible to postsecondary advisors.
- 5. Strengthen Integration of WBL with Career Advising**
Expand high-quality WBL programs like **Cañon City High School's education series** and embed career advising as a central element. Using frameworks like the **WBL continuum** will ensure learners receive comprehensive, experiential learning.

Exemplary Models in Colorado

- **Jeffco Career Links:** Collaborates with Career Hub Navigators to align career advising and preparation experiences, such as WBL opportunities to individual schools.
- **DPS Work-Based Learning:** The largest K-12 WBL initiative nationally providing diverse opportunities for learners to engage with industry leaders to support career connected conversations in alignment with district postsecondary and career advisement.
- **Cherry Creek Innovation Campus:** Dedicated campus focused on career-connected learning, experiences, and advisement.
- **Rural Collaborative:** Brings career-connected learning to underserved rural districts demonstrating scalable partnerships for aligned career advising supports.
- **Generation Schools Network:** Employs a comprehensive career advising framework designed to connect education with workforce readiness. Their approach emphasizes community collaboration, tailored career pathways, and leveraging partnerships to prepare learners for postsecondary success.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
CO K-12 programming examples	Jeffco Career Links	The Career Links team collaborates closely with each Career Hub Navigator to support the unique work-based learning priorities of each school using a variety of resources
	Westminster Future Center	Staffed with a school counselor who supports students across the district with ICAP, career guidance, and concurrent enrollment
	DPS Work Based Learning	Provides hands-on experience and opportunities to expand professional networks through a full suite of WBL experiences
	Generation Schools Network	Focused efforts on developing and facilitating distributed career advising partnerships and networks
	Aurora Public Schools Career Pathways Guide	Excellent resource for students and parents connecting high school experiences with career exploration
	St Vrain WBL Learning Guide	Overview of opportunities for students to engage in WBL and career exploration
	Cherry Creek Innovation Campus	Specific campus dedicated to work-based and career-connected learning and experiences
	Denver Scholarship Foundation	Overall, DSF's career counseling efforts focus on increasing employability, supporting career planning, and ensuring that students are well-prepared for their chosen professions
	D11 WBL Opportunities	Multiple opportunities to engage in internships, employment, and WBL
	Rural Collaborative currently in 6 CO districts	Model for collaboration and partnership in rural districts to bring career-connected learning to all students
	Canon City High School	A three-year education series designed to inject relevance and engagement to learning and prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce
	Mesa County	Job shadows, internships, and apprenticeships

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
CO K-12 programming examples, cont.	CMU/D51 partnership	Partnership between Colorado Mesa University and Mesa County Valley District 51 to provide college and career counseling to high school students
	Greeley Evans D6 — Career Explore Internship Program	150-hour internship program for rising seniors
	CareerX Eagle County	Variety of experiences for learners from job shadowing to apprenticeship
	I Have a Dream Foundation	Career workshops, job tours, and paid internships for students enrolled in the program
Resources available to support K-12	Colorado CTE	Program that helps students in Colorado develop career pathways and academic plans, starting in fifth grade and continuing through high school and college
	CDE Meaningful Career Conversations and Career Advising Tools	Meaningful Career Conversations support learners to understand how their unique aptitudes, skills, talents, self-identity, and values influence the decision-making process for life-long learning (developed by the Colorado Education Initiative in partnership with Indigo Education Company).
	Colorado Career Advising	Designed for career seekers, students, and advisors, the Colorado Career Advising (CCA) Tool features a quick survey to identify strengths and motivators, laying the foundation for a personalized career action plan (developed by the Colorado Education Initiative in partnership with Indigo Education Company).
	Advance CTE	Resource library for professionals supporting students through CTE and career advising
	Couragion	STEM career exploration with a focus on diversity and inclusion; virtual and self-directed
	RoadTrip Nation	Tools and resources for educators to use with students to prepare them to interview potential career mentors; either virtual or in-person
	Naviance	College, career, and life readiness skills
	Kuder Connect 2 Business	Career connections and curriculum aligned to national WBL standards

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
Resources available to support K-12, cont.	WorkED	Career-connected learning programs including externships and pre-apprenticeships
	YouScience	Personalized content based on surveys to direct and support students in career exploration
	School Links	Supports counselors across the college and career readiness continuum
	CareerPrepped	Competency-based system that helps students build and demonstrate soft skills
	Inside Track	Resources to support K-12 college readiness
	Certified School Career Development Advisor	NCDA training for school-based counselors
	MindSpark	Teacher professional development

SECTION 4

In-Depth Analysis of Postsecondary Resources

Higher education institutions face critical challenges in career counseling and advising resulting in limited support for learners' academic and professional aspirations. Current models often conflate academic advising and career counseling leading to inefficiencies and a lack of specialized guidance. Career centers frequently focus on transactional services, such as resume writing, without offering comprehensive, market-aligned career planning. Moreover, limited training for advisors and easy access to up-to-date resources further undermine the efficacy of these programs.

Key Challenges

- Fragmentation Between Secondary and Postsecondary Advising**
Disconnection between career exploration, preparation experiences, and postsecondary advising at the secondary level and career and academic advising in higher education creates a fragmented transition for learners. A cohesive postsecondary planning strategy requires coordination between career and academic advising between secondary and postsecondary institutions.

2. **Single-Advisor Models with Limited Training OR Separate Advisors without Connection**
Combining academic and career counseling under one advisor can dilute expertise and limit learner access to tailored guidance without effective and on-going training for college advisors. Institutions with separate academic and career advisors often lack coordination, leaving learners underserved. This can also lead to duplication and, at times, inaccurate or conflicting information and guidance.
3. **Minimal Training for Career Advisors**
Academic and career advisors, including career center staff, often lack the necessary training in career development, market trends, and personalized advising. This results in a narrow focus on logistical support rather than holistic career planning.
4. **Outdated Career Resources**
Many career centers fail to provide tools that reflect emerging industry trends and evolving job market demands. Instead, resources are often tied to traditional academic majors, neglecting the dynamic nature of modern careers.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. **Develop Integrated Advising Frameworks**
Institutions should create a unified advising model that bridges CTE, academic advising, and career counseling. Messaging should emphasize their interconnectedness, reinforcing that both are integral to learners' success. Programs like **MSU's Classroom to Career Hub** exemplify this approach.
2. **Invest in Specialized Career Counseling and/or Enhance Single Advisor Training**
Establish dedicated career advisors trained in industry-specific trends, career navigation strategies, and holistic career planning. Institutions can adopt examples such as the **Red Rocks Community College Career Success Center** which employs certified career counselors. Alternatively, an institution may provide professional development for academic advisors to bolster their knowledge and skill set around career advising, focusing on emerging market trends and comprehensive counseling techniques. Expanding foundational career advising training to all campus support staff will ensure consistent messaging across the institution.
3. **Modernize Career Exploration Tools**
Deploy platforms that enable personalized career exploration based on skills and interests, aligning with current job market needs. Tools such as **Handshake** can connect learners to internships, career opportunities, and employer networks.

Promising Models in Higher Education

- **MSU Classroom to Career Hub:** Integrates career readiness into every learner's educational journey.
- **Red Rocks Community College Career Success Center:** Offers certified career counselors and comprehensive resources.
- **University of Denver Career Exploration Services:** Combines undergraduate and graduate career advising in a centralized framework.
- **Colorado Mesa University:** Advisors help learners with course selection, academic planning, and navigating university resources. These resources are integrated with The Career Services Team which aids in exploring career paths, developing professional skills, and connecting with potential employers.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
Postsecondary programming examples	MSU — Classroom to Career Hub	Program designed to connect every learner with the resources, education, and skill development essential for exploring and launching meaningful careers
	Red Rocks Community College Career Success Center	Operating within Student Affairs the team consists of three members including two certified career counselors.
	CU Denver Career Center	Integrates WBL, career support, and undergraduate research.
	Inside Track	Direct-to-learner resources for enrollment, retention, and career readiness
	Career Advance Colorado	Partnership with community and technical colleges to provide training in a variety of fields at no cost to participant; Career advising/coaching not part of this program
	CU Division of Continuing Education	For non-degree and continuing ed learners; 1 career advisor
	CU Career Services	Range of career support services for Boulder-campus learners
	Colorado College	Resources for Colorado College students
	CSU Career Center	Resources for CSU students
	University of Denver — advising	Career advising for undergrad and graduate learners through a one-person department
	Career Exploration	Career and Professional Development Dept that offers learners various ways to explore, engage, and connect with various careers
	UNC	Center for Career Readiness utilizing Handshake to connect learners to opportunities; also includes individual support for resumes, interview prep, etc.
	FRCC Career Resources	Self-help site for learners
	CMC Career Services	Self-help site for learners and displaced workers
	Red Rocks Community College Career Services	Self-guided and in-person resources for learners, alumni, and community members

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
Resources available to support Postsecondary	Colorado CTE	Program that helps learners in Colorado develop career pathways and academic plans, starting in fifth grade and continuing through high school and college
	Advance CTE	Resource library for professionals supporting learners through CTE and career advising
	CDHE Career Connected Designation	Framework for integrating academic curriculum with work-based learning experiences empowering learners with the skills and knowledge to thrive in high-demand, high-wage careers
	National College Attainment Network	Support for college-level coaches and advisors to start and grow career coaching and advising
	NACADA	Membership organization for academic advising and advisors
	Advisors LEAD	CDHE program with a strand focused on Purpose-Driven Advising
	Collegiate Career Services Association	Membership organization that hosts conferences and convenings for college-based career advisors and counselors in Colorado and Wyoming
	National Career Development Association	Membership organization offering resources and training
	National Association of Colleges and Employers	Membership organization offering resources and training

SECTION 5

In-Depth Analysis of General Population Resources

Career coaching and advising programs in Colorado demonstrate significant potential to enhance workforce development but are hindered by critical gaps in equity, data tracking, and resource distribution. These disparities are particularly evident in rural and underfunded regions, where individuals face limited access to consistent, well-resourced support.

Key Challenges

1. **Inconsistent Data Collection and Reporting**

The absence of a statewide system for tracking service utilization and outcomes makes it difficult to evaluate program reach or improve service delivery. Organizations lack clarity on the demographics and needs of those served, limiting opportunities for innovation and collaboration. For instance, the **Career Coaching Collaborative** highlights a consortium approach to career advising but lacks cohesive reporting mechanisms to measure its impact effectively.

2. **Geographic Disparities**

Urban centers tend to benefit from well-funded initiatives such as **Cross Purpose**, which combines career alignment with personal growth strategies, while rural areas often lack comparable programs. This inequity underscores the need for statewide digital platforms and shared resources to bridge the urban-rural divide.

3. **Limited Integration of Career Counseling with Employment Services**

With prioritization on job placement, employment services are limited in being able to focus on addressing long-term career planning, resulting in low retention rates. Initiatives like **Mi Casa Resource Center**, which navigates the job acquisition process holistically, provide a promising model for combining these services.

4. **Insufficient Focus on the Psychology of Work**

Programs generally overlook the role of mental and physical well-being in career success. Examples like **Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center**, which incorporates peer navigators, demonstrate the benefits of addressing holistic career and personal support needs.

5. **Resource Competition and Fragmentation**

Financial constraints and siloed efforts create challenges in fostering trust and collaboration within and across the education to workforce ecosystem. While the **CWDC-funded career counselors** have enhanced programs such as the **Youth Employment Academy**, competition for funding limits scalability. Similar competition exists due to limitations in capacity and resources for industry to be part of career development efforts.

Recommendations for Improvement

- 1. Develop a Statewide Data Tracking System**
Implement standardized tools to collect demographic, geographic, and outcome data across organizations like **Workforce Centers**, **Career OneStop**, and **ONet Online**. Such systems would enhance transparency and accountability facilitating statewide collaboration and learning. Current state initiatives to develop a **statewide longitudinal data system** and upcoming modernization of the **Connecting Colorado** tool will support this effort.
- 2. Standardize Career Coaching Training**
Establish a certification program focusing on counseling strategies, career exploration, and labor market analysis. Initiatives like **Activate Work's Durable Skills Career Advising Program** offer a foundation for scalable, skill-based training.
- 3. Bridge Geographic Disparities with Digital Tools**
Expand access to career coaching in underserved areas through virtual platforms and partnerships. Programs such as **Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning**, which offers tailored workshops for immigrants and refugees, can serve as templates for adaptable digital solutions.
- 4. Integrate Career Counseling with Job Placement**
Expand initiatives like **Forward Steps** and **Goodwill Rehire**, which incorporate post-placement career development to ensure stability and growth, including incentives for employers for supporting such programs. Career coaching should emphasize alignment with long-term goals, not just immediate employment.
- 5. Incorporate Holistic Approaches to Career Development**
Programs like **Cross Purpose** and **Mile High Youth Corps**, which integrate career advising with personal and mental health support, demonstrate the value of addressing the psychological dimensions of work.

Spotlight on Exemplary Programs

- **Cross Purpose:** Focuses on aligning career goals with mental health and personal growth offering a replicable model for comprehensive career development.
- **ActivateWork:** Provides targeted programs for tech careers integrating advising with skills training and apprenticeships.
- **Mi Casa Resource Center:** Offers end-to-end support for job seekers from resume building to salary negotiation.
- **Youth Employment Academy:** Targets youth facing employment barriers providing dedicated CWDC-funded counselors.
- **Colorado Rural Education Collaborative** (part of the Generation Schools Network): Works to enrich rural community access to assets that advance education and economic development for local benefit.
- **The G.R.O.W. Network**, a partnership between the Arvada Chamber, Jeffco Business and Workforce Center, Jeffco Public Schools, Red Rocks Community College, and other partner organizations, show what is possible by convening business, education, workforce, and non-profit partners through a collaborative, data-informed approach to tackling talent pipeline challenges.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
General population support and resources	Cross Purpose	Career coaching and advising provide personalized career planning, industry-specific preparation, and development tools, while CrossPurpose coaching focuses on personal growth, career alignment, and mental health support to connect participants with employers
	Activate Work	Provide specific programming for individuals interested in tech careers: Activate Work Durable Skills Career Advising Program and PerScholas IT Apprenticeship and Career Pathways Program
	Connecting Colorado	Part of a state- and county-run system that delivers immediate, tangible results for both job seekers and employers.
	G.R.O.W. Network	Career Coaches for residents offered through the Arvada Chamber and LightCast. Network of organizations coordinating services for career coaching/exploration, work-based learning, and other workforce development practices through shared learning to drive impact.
	Career Coaching Collaborative	Consortium of workforce centers and non-profits focused on supporting Coloradans through career coaching All grantees and funding initiatives found here Actus Policy Research will be evaluating the impact and effectiveness of these programs
	Center for Work Education and Employment	Employment training curriculum and support services for individuals without traditional education or experience; received a career counselor through CWDC
	Mt Carmel Veterans Service Center	Wrap-around services for veterans including peer navigator counselors
	Mi Casa Resource Center	Team of 3 counselors support individuals on identifying career goals and navigating the job acquisition process from resume through negotiating salaries
	Youth Employment Academy	Job training and experience for young people aged 14-21 who face significant barriers to employment; received a career counselor through CWDC

STRAND	NAME	NOTES
General population support and resources, cont.	Mile High Youth Corps	Opportunities for 18- to 24-year-olds to earn while they explore 4 career pathways; received a career counselor through CWDC
	Thrive Colorado	Employment support for high-need Coloradans
	Youth Mentors	1:1 mentoring meant to provide education and career guidance for young people
	Workforce Centers	Offer career counselors for Coloradans living in specific regions
	Colorado Career Advising	Resources for job seekers and career advisors
	CDLE	Resources for job seekers
	Colorado Career Development	Bank of resources for job seekers
	Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning	Career coaching and workshops for immigrants and refugees
	Center for People with Disabilities	Supporting individuals with disabilities in obtaining part- or full-time employment; received a career counselor through CWDC
	Goodwill Rehire	Eleven-week training program focusing on skills and career development
	Forward Steps	Provides postsecondary and career support and mentorship for youth who have experienced foster care
	Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative	Skills training and intentional connection to educational and employment outcomes; career support and advising
	Workforce Board Calendar	Overview of events through workforce boards for all job seekers
	ONet Online	Free online career exploration and job analysis resources based on DOL data
	Career OneStop	Free tools and resources for career, training, and job search based on DOL data, serving job seekers, businesses, student learners, and career advisors

SECTION 6

Statewide Model Examples

WASHINGTON

[Career Connect Washington](#) serves as a state-level partner, engaging regional leaders to drive education and workforce initiatives. The public-private partnership team leads statewide convenings, strategy development, technical assistance, and funding distribution to support career-connected learning. CCW builds partnerships across education, employers, labor, community organizations, government, and philanthropy to fill gaps and strengthen collaboration in the system.

A key component of CCW's work is funding. It provides competitive grants to intermediaries, regional networks, and sector leaders, ensuring that Career Launch programs meet statutory requirements and align with statewide goals for growth and equity. These programs receive state funding for K-12, community colleges, and universities, with additional employer support through wages paid to learners and apprentices.

CCW was established in a supportive environment, with backing from the governor, seed funding from philanthropy, and a network of regional leaders facilitated by [Washington STEM](#). Washington STEM continues to support regional networks, data work, and technical assistance, particularly focusing on equity by engaging BIPOC and community-based organizations.

A major success factor for CCW is its continuous learning approach. By listening to stakeholders and adapting strategies, CCW effectively scales career-connected learning across sectors. In 2022, statewide Sector Leaders were appointed to co-create strategies with employers in high-growth industries, ensuring that each sector has a targeted, informed approach for expanding career pathways.

INDIANA

Indiana has a well-structured approach to career counseling that supports individuals at various stages of their career journey. The state emphasizes a range of services through partnerships with educational institutions and vocational organizations.

One of the key platforms is the [Indiana Career Explorer tool](#), which helps users assess their interests, work values, and skills to explore potential careers and educational opportunities. This platform is free and accessible to all Indiana residents, providing guidance on mapping out career goals.

Additionally, the state offers professional development resources for career coaches, equipping them with skills to deliver human-centered, equity-driven guidance. Programs like the Rework America Alliance help career coaches refine their approaches and better support job seekers by focusing on skills-based coaching.

These efforts collectively promote equitable access to career opportunities and foster stronger connections between education, employment, and individual career aspirations.

KENTUCKY

Kentucky has developed a strong focus on work-based learning and career counseling through programs led by the Kentucky Department of Education and partnerships with industry and workforce development agencies.

The [Kentucky Career Center](#) supports individuals by offering career counseling, job search assistance, resume building, and connections to employment opportunities. They also provide guidance on training and certification programs to enhance employability in high-demand sectors. The center works closely with local businesses to ensure that workforce development aligns with state economic goals.

[Kentucky's Individual Learning Plan](#), a requirement for learners in grades 6-12, integrates career exploration and goal-setting into the education system. This program ensures that learners receive personalized career counseling to explore various pathways, plan for postsecondary education, and prepare for employment in high-growth fields.

Efforts like [Kentucky's Talent Pipeline Management](#) initiative also focus on aligning education and workforce systems with employer needs. By fostering partnerships between education providers and industries, the state emphasizes skill development and talent retention to ensure a strong workforce for the future.

DELAWARE

Delaware has developed a robust approach to work-based learning and career counseling through initiatives led by the Delaware Department of Education and partnerships with local employers and workforce development agencies.

The [Delaware Pathways](#) initiative plays a central role by connecting learners to career and technical education programs, internships, and apprenticeships in high-demand industries such as healthcare, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. These programs provide hands-on experience and ensure that learners' education aligns with the needs of Delaware's workforce.

The [Delaware Department of Labor](#) supports job seekers through its Career Services offering career counseling, job search assistance, resume building, and access to training programs that enhance employability in growing sectors. The state's job search platform, [Delaware JobLink](#), also connects individuals with career opportunities and resources.

Additionally, the [Delaware Office of Work-Based Learning](#) promotes apprenticeships, internships, and co-op programs, building strong partnerships between schools and employers to expand career-connected learning and provide learners with valuable work experience.

Efforts such as the [Delaware Student Success Collaborative](#) brought together schools, higher education institutions, and employers to ensure learners receive comprehensive career counseling, postsecondary planning, and work-based learning opportunities. These initiatives are key to building a skilled workforce and ensuring that Delaware's education and workforce systems are aligned with industry needs for long-term economic growth.

ALABAMA

Alabama has developed an inclusive approach to work-based learning and career counseling through programs like the [Alabama Office of Apprenticeship](#) and initiatives led by the Alabama State Department of Education.

The AOA promotes registered apprenticeships and other forms of WBL by partnering with employers, training providers, and workforce professionals. Their efforts are focused on creating high-quality career training opportunities that match the needs of Alabama's growing industries, particularly in high-demand sectors like advanced manufacturing, IT, and healthcare. AOA's work also involves ensuring that programs meet both state and federal standards, thus aligning with economic development goals for the state.

In schools, Alabama's Department of Education has established a [work-based learning manual](#) to guide the implementation of WBL programs in K-12 and postsecondary education. This framework integrates career counseling, hands-on learning, and apprenticeships to ensure learners are better prepared for the workforce, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Alabama's career-connected learning initiatives also emphasize talent retention through public-private partnerships, like those fostered by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, which hosts events such as the [2024 Alabama Summit on Talent Retention and Work-Based Learning](#).

SECTION 7

National Model Examples

GENERATION SCHOOLS NETWORK

The [Generation Schools Network](#) (GSN) employs a comprehensive career advising framework designed to connect education with workforce readiness. Their approach emphasizes community collaboration, tailored career pathways, and leveraging partnerships to prepare learners for postsecondary success.

Framework and Tools:

- **Pathways to Prosperity:** This program establishes a regional model for college and career readiness, particularly in rural areas. It addresses unique challenges like limited resources and opportunities through localized strategies.
- **Equity-Driven Initiatives:** GSN focuses on historically underserved populations, including learners with disabilities and justice-engaged youth, ensuring equal access to career development programs.
- **Workforce Development Partnerships:** Collaborations with entities like the Colorado Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and local businesses provide hands-on learning, mentoring, and pathway-specific support.

Process:

- **Community and School Collaboration:** GSN partners with schools, families, and community organizations to identify and address barriers to career readiness.
- **Data-Driven Solutions:** Using insights from local and state-wide efforts, such as the Colorado Rural Education Collaborative, GSN tailors its programs to meet specific needs of different demographics.

- **Practical Support:** Learners engage in real-world experiences, skill training, and mentorship to build their professional and academic competencies.

This integrated approach ensures that learners are equipped to succeed in education, careers, and beyond, particularly those in rural or underserved areas

THE ASA CENTER FOR CAREER NAVIGATION AT JFF

The [ASA Center for Career Navigation at JFF](#) will help 16-to-24-year-old learners find, evaluate, access, and pay for high-quality education and training programs while helping employers identify workers with skills that match their needs. Their goal is to empower 20 million young learners by 2030.

Strategies include:

- **Uncovering Market Trends:** Conduct market research to understand trends, user needs, and features that will add value for young learners, employers, and education and training providers.
- **Activating Networks and Influencing Policy:** Leverage existing connections with employers, policymakers, and education and training providers that lead to new policies and funding in support of high-quality, nondegree pathways.
- **Building and Scaling a Solution:** Develop a comprehensive, free digital experience designed to guide young people in accessing information on all viable education and career paths, beyond just those that require a college degree.

APPRECIATIVE ADVISING

[Appreciative Advising](#), an initiative of Florida Atlantic University, is a learner-centered approach to academic and career counseling that focuses on identifying and leveraging learners' strengths, aspirations, and potential. The model encourages advisors to build positive relationships with learners by asking open-ended questions that help them reflect on their successes and values. This approach is designed to empower learners to take ownership of their academic and career journeys by focusing on their abilities rather than deficits.

Florida Atlantic University offers professional development, resources, and an annual conference for professionals looking to learn more. Additionally, FAU offers a certification program for educators interested in becoming Certified Appreciative Advisors.

STRADA

[Strada Education Foundation](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving pathways between education and employment. Its mission is to help individuals navigate the transition from learning to earning by enhancing access to quality education and career opportunities. Strada collaborates with educational institutions, employers, policymakers, and community organizations to create programs and solutions that align postsecondary education with workforce needs.

A [recent Strada report](#) defined quality career coaching in higher ed as a personalized, learner-centered process that provides tailored guidance to help learners identify and pursue the education and training experiences necessary for a successful career. It involves delivering timely information — particularly before or during a learner's first year — about potential career paths, job opportunities related to their field of study, expected earnings, and career outcomes of graduates from similar programs.

Additionally, quality career coaching supports learners in setting clear education and career goals and developing actionable plans to achieve them. It also addresses potential barriers to success, offering solutions and resources to navigate challenges. Through this holistic approach, learners are empowered to make informed decisions and stay on track toward long-term career success.

Ultimately, recommendations from Strada related to providing quality career coaching for higher ed learners include:

- **Provide Timely Information to Incoming Learners:** Incorporate career guidance into orientation, advising sessions, and first-year experiences to help learners connect academic interests with career pathways from the start.
- **Reach Learners Where They Are:** Embed career guidance in core curriculum and use technology to ensure all learners receive support, regardless of access to the career center.
- **Build Multiple Touch Points:** Offer career guidance at multiple stages of learners' education through ongoing check-ins, workshops, and advising to reinforce career planning.
- **Equip Practitioners with Data:** Provide career center professionals and faculty with data on earnings and career outcomes to help learners make informed decisions early in their academic journey.
- **Empower the Campus Community:** Train staff, faculty, peers, alumni, and employers to offer career guidance, creating a campus-wide network of support for learners.

TRIO

TRIO is a set of federally funded programs designed to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in their pursuit of higher education. These programs provide academic, financial, and personal assistance to low-income individuals, first-generation college learners, and those with disabilities. Key services offered by TRIO programs include career guidance encompassing career exploration, internships, and job placement services. TRIO programs include Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services, among others.

Specific career advising programming:

- **TRIO Career Development Program (TCDP):** Offers career exploration, planning, and strengths assessment, as well as coaching, skill development, and connections to employers. TCDP learners also participate in career acceleration programs and other employment opportunities.
- **TRIO Talent Search Program:** A free program that offers career exploration, academic advising, and financial aid advising to 9th–12th grade learners. Learners also participate in activities like college visits, career experiences, and cultural enrichment trips.
- **Shape Your Future:** An online resource from TRIO Educational Talent Search that includes an interactive game to help learners plan their life after high school.
- **Online course:** An online course from TRIO Educational Talent Search that covers resources to help learners prepare for college. The course uses an online system similar to what many college classes use.



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