

# READY FOR WORK AFTER COVID-19:

## How Can Colorado's Workforce Development System Prepare Coloradans for the Future of Work?

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Presented to Skills2Compete

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# Plan for Today

- **Overview of Project**
- **Brief Data Findings**
- **Themes: Statewide, Rural, and Suburban/Urban**
- **Feedback on Opportunities**
- **Feedback on Recommendations**

# Overview of Project

- **Sponsored by ECMC Foundation and CCLP**
- **Research based on data compilation/analysis and stakeholder interviews across Colorado, with an emphasis on circumstances and actions between February 2020 - February 2021**
- **Stakeholders included state/regional public agencies , diverse community organizations, community colleges and Adult Ed programs, impacted individuals, national organizations, businesses and employers**
- **Focused on 9 regions in Colorado to define some of the different challenges and solutions**
- **Emphasis on the impacts and severity, and targeted efforts to address these during and post-pandemic**

# Overview of Project

- **Focused on reasons for long-term unemployment and efforts related to unemployment caused and impacted by COVID 19**
- **Significant research into how different training and credential options have been pursued, by which unemployed workers, and in which regions**
- **Groups of unemployed workers impacted by the pandemic were also interviewed**
- **Results and recommendations will be shared with stakeholders in April and May prior to completing the project**

# Stakeholders

- **Colorado Department of Labor and Employment**
  - **Various offices**
- **Boulder Employment First**
- **Colorado Department of Higher Education**
- **Colorado Department of Human Services**
- **Colorado Workforce Development Council**
- **Community organizations from Adam, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Fremont, Jefferson, Mesa, and Pueblo counties**

# Regions

## NORTHWEST

Population 25 to 54: **40.8%**  
 Share Non-White: **12.1%**  
 Share HS or Less: **33.6%**  
 Limited English HHs: **1.2%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **65.1%**

## RURAL RESORT

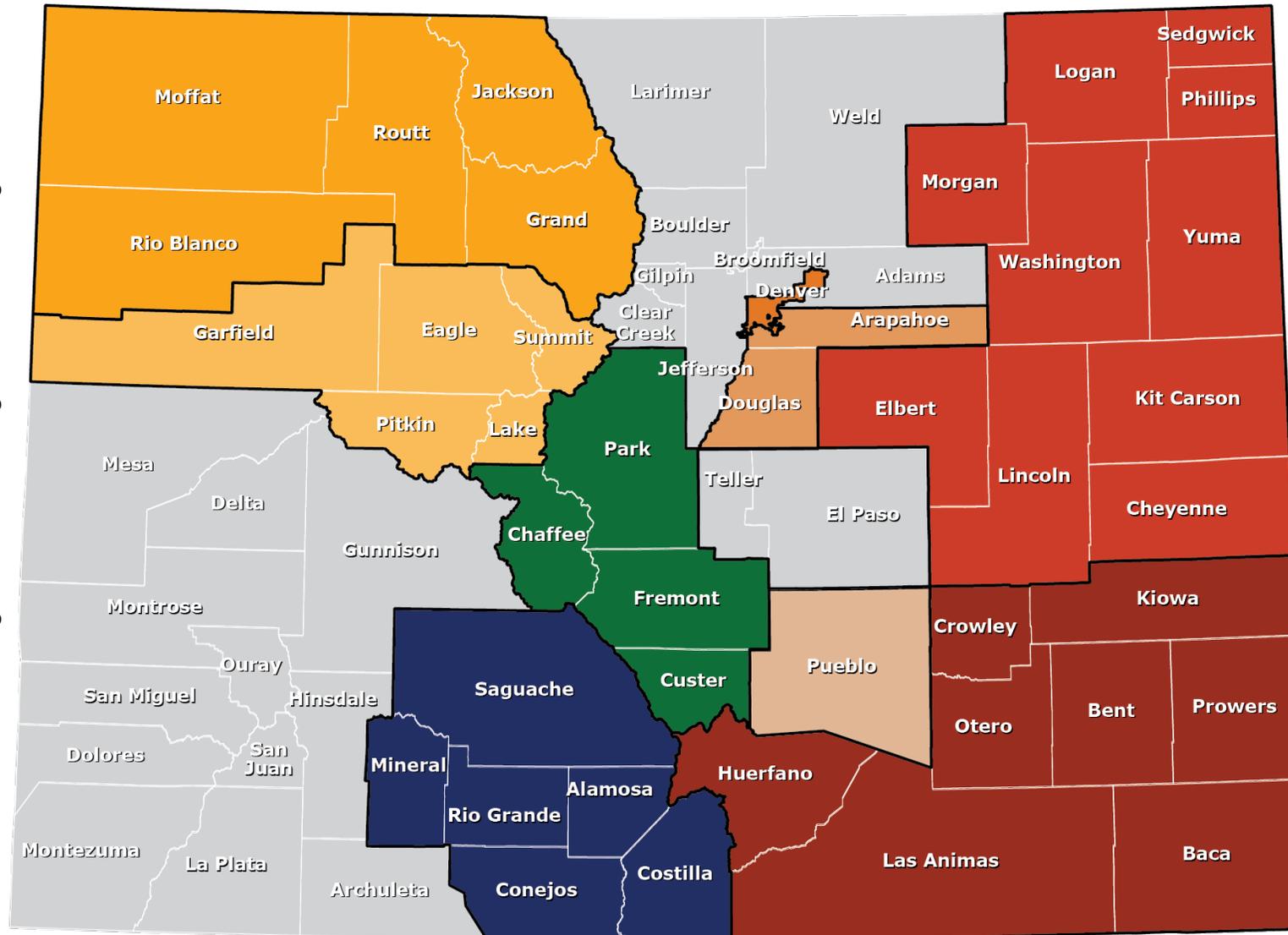
Population 25 to 54: **45.0%**  
 Share Non-White: **24.1%**  
 Share HS or Less: **32.3%**  
 Limited English HHs: **5.0%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **63.0%**

## UPPER ARKANSAS

Population 25 to 54: **38.8%**  
 Share Non-White: **17.1%**  
 Share HS or Less: **43.7%**  
 Limited English HHs: **0.5%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **58.2%**

## PUEBLO

Population 25 to 54: **36.7%**  
 Share Non-White: **44.8%**  
 Share HS or Less: **38.3%**  
 Limited English HHs: **1.3%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **62.1%**



## EASTERN

Population 25 to 54: **37.0%**  
 Share Non-White: **22.9%**  
 Share HS or Less: **42.8%**  
 Limited English HHs: **2.9%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **56.5%**

## DENVER

Population 25 to 54: **50.5%**  
 Share Non-White: **41.5%**  
 Share HS or Less: **27.5%**  
 Limited English HHs: **4.6%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **74.7%**

## ARAPAHOE/DOUGLAS

Population 25 to 54: **42.7%**  
 Share Non-White: **29.7%**  
 Share HS or Less: **22.7%**  
 Limited English HHs: **3.2%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **82.2%**

## SOUTH-CENTRAL

Population 25 to 54: **33.4%**  
 Share Non-White: **49.0%**  
 Share HS or Less: **42.9%**  
 Limited English HHs: **5.8%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **44.4%**

## SOUTHEAST

Population 25 to 54: **34.8%**  
 Share Non-White: **38.6%**  
 Share HS or Less: **45.9%**  
 Limited English HHs: **2.7%**  
 HHs With Broadband: **47.6%**

Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey

# Colorado & COVID-19 Prior to 2020

- **Colorado had one of the fastest growing economies in the country in the years leading up to 2020, both in terms of GDP and jobs**
- **Despite this strong growth during the post-Great Recession recovery, some regions of the state and sectors of the economy have yet to fully recover the jobs lost during the last recession**
- **Job growth in low-wage industries drove our initial recovery from the Great Recession. Between 2008 and 2018, low-wage industries made up the majority (40%) of jobs created**

# Colorado & COVID-19 One Year Later

- Colorado had 156,700 fewer jobs in Feb 2021 compared to Feb 2020
- Employment among workers in the bottom 25% of earners decreased by 16.5% between January 2020 and February 2021 compared to a decrease of 1.4% for middle wage workers and an increase of 8.5% for high wage workers.
- The accommodation and food services sector (\$451 avg weekly wage) still needed to recover 50,900 jobs to be at Feb 2020 levels; this represents close to a third of the jobs that are yet to be recovered
- The management of companies and enterprises sector (\$2,616 avg weekly wage), on the other hand, had 1,700 more jobs in Feb 2021 than a year before
- In addition to an unemployment rate of 6.4% in Feb 2021, unemployed Coloradans had been looking for work an average of 21 weeks in Feb 2021 compared to 13 weeks in Feb 2020

# Colorado & COVID-19 After COVID-19

- **The BLS projected employment in Colorado would grow by 9.6% between 2019 and 2029. The moderate and severe scenarios suggest employment could instead grow by 8.7% or 7.6%, respectively**
- **Under the severe scenario, Colorado would not see a return to 2019 levels of employment in the retail trade sector, accommodation and food services sector, and the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector by 2029. Workers in these sectors have some of the lowest average wages in the state.**
- **On the other hand, Colorado could see more employment than originally expected in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector, the manufacturing sector, and the information sector than originally forecast. Workers in these sectors have some of the highest average wages in the state.**

# Themes & Findings

## Statewide

- **Staff of most workforce centers, especially in rural areas, spent significant time in 2020 assisting individuals to apply for UI benefits and problem solving more than job development and placement**
- **Training opportunities have primarily been in work readiness, computer skills advancement, and job search skills during the pandemic. One exception has been truck driving training.**
- **Limited numbers of individuals who lost jobs during the pandemic have entered formal credential or degree programs. Reasons include ineligibility; limited remote access and comfort doing online training, and reduced access to in-class training**
- **The pandemic accelerated different economic dynamic such as reliance on digital access and remote work**

# Themes & Findings Statewide

- **Digital equity and literacy issues ranging from access to Broadband and “into the home” connectivity; possession of adequate equipment; comfort with and trust of technology; skills to use technology and access to assistance.**
- **Limited access to “work-based learning” and opportunities has prevented individuals from exploring new work possibilities**
- **Ongoing stresses and fears related to being unemployed with limited income; overall family, food and housing insecurity; isolation and exposures to COVID 19 has increased levels of mental illness and behavioral health challenges.**
- **Different stakeholders observed the fear of losing UI and not making as much while working was a factor for when people returned to work**

# Themes & Findings **Rural**

- **Few new economic dev opportunities coming to rural regions**
- **Recovery in resort areas lagged that of the rest of the state over the summer, but job recovery and the unemployment rate are now close to statewide conditions**
- **Other rural communities placing people in local jobs; workforce has been migrating to urban areas from certain rural areas due to challenges that existed prior to COVID**
- **Digital equity issues have had significant impact in identifying potential opportunities and revealing the need for digital “upgrading” on all levels in rural communities**

- **Replacing lost jobs from Accommodation and Food Sector is still a challenge for the front range regions**
- **Summer jobs in these areas have declined due to colder weather and overall COVID surges**
- **Lack of work-based learning opportunities that helped individuals experiment with new job options has been impactful**
- **The need for some digital skills for most jobs is an ongoing challenge for unemployed workers**

# Opportunities

- **Expanding Broadband across Colorado – will create new jobs for installing the fiber and related support positions (Future of Work Office, CDLE)**
- **Increased types of apprenticeships will create different career pathways in new sectors including public service (discussion with staff at CDLE)**
- **Parents with children at home are increasingly wanting and pursuing jobs that can be performed from home – save childcare and transportation expenses (interview with CWEE staff)**
- **There are ongoing opportunities for health professionals in most regions across Colorado (interviews with Southeast Sub Area, Rural Resorts Sub Area)**
- **People with Justice Involvement - Opportunities in tech jobs and construction trades – (interviews with Justice Reskill, Community Works)**

# Recommendations

- **Prioritize and invest in the importance and significance of digital equity in all parts of the state**
  - **Broadband and connectivity; access to affordable and high speed internet, equipment and security programs; access to a flexible and responsive coaching/navigation program**
- **Create a position at the state (perhaps CDLE) that assists workforce regions to identify and obtain diverse funding streams that support diverse types of services in different regions.**
- **Identify specific pre-apprenticeship options rural and urban regions to develop and fund as new work pathways for workers impacted by COVID 19.**
- **Incorporate new funds from American Recovery Plan Act into targeted opportunities for the displaced workers with lower skills**

# Next Steps

- **Complete stakeholder interviews**
- **Focus groups with folks with lived experience**
- **Webinar/final presentation on findings and recommendations**
- **Completing written report by end of May 2021**
- **Ongoing discussions with Skills2Compete Coalition on these workforce issues**

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