



Skills2Compete-Colorado: Goals for 2022-2023

Chaer Robert, Coordinator
Colorado Center on Law and Policy

Goal #1: Support the National Skills Coalition's *Skills for an Inclusive Recovery* policy agenda

- A safety net that supports workers' **long-term pathways** to skilled careers
- A comprehensive approach to re-training and re-employment for **all** displaced workers
- Publicly funded job creation that includes training for those in need of a new career
- Support to local businesses to **avert layoffs** and **encourage upskilling**
- Sector partnerships to drive industry specific training and hiring strategies
- Digital access and learning for all working people at home and on the job
- High quality, job-ready education for those who need to re-enter the labor market, including making college work for working people
- Public data and **accountability** regarding who is being included in this recovery

For more details, visit: <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/skills-for-an-inclusive-economic-recovery/>

Goal #2: Expand the access to *support services* for education, skills training, job search and job retention for those with barriers to employment.

Support services include childcare, housing and transportation.

- Renew the Emergency Employment Support Services Program
- Identify ways to leverage existing sources of funding for support services.
- Advocate for additional funding for support services, and the role of support services in **educational success** and **job retention**.
- Work with Colorado Department of Higher Education on the role they can play in identifying and connecting low-income students to support services to help them complete their education.

Goal #3: Promote *digital inclusion* at both the individual and systemic levels

- Work with the Future of Work Office to plan a **coordinated state agency response** to the need for people to acquire digital access, connectivity, and skills to obtain skills training, succeed at job search, and retain ongoing employment. Identify specific

digital skills required and of value. Promote access to community digital coaches and community internet access.

- Advocate for **digital skills training** through every means possible – on the job, from adult education, libraries, schools (to include both children and their parents in digital access and skills), human services, community service organizations, etc.
- Build in optional access points into systems set up for online access only.

Goal #4: Advocate for *SNAP Employment and Training* development into a skill-building, career launching opportunity.

- Advise Colorado Department of Human Services on implementation of HB21-1270, our bill which added a one-time \$3 million in state funding to pull down a \$3 million federal match to expend and improve the SNAP Employment and Training Program. Our emphasis is **expansion to rural areas** without the program and the inclusion of smaller **community-based providers** who could not afford to front the 50% non-federal match.
- Track the development of additional support services and work-based learning opportunities
- Work with Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Hunger-Free Colorado, Young Invincibles, etc. on **expanding access to SNAP** by having Community College CTE Classes count as work activity, and by identifying and leveraging Work Study funding to maximize the number of low-income four-year students who will qualify automatically.

Goal #5: Expand Access to *Adult Education*

- Advocate for **increased ongoing funding**. A one-time infusion of \$5 million in American Rescue Plan funding under HB21-1264 will temporarily fund an expansion from the previous funding level of less than \$1 million per year in general fund.
- Evaluate outcomes for the “Pay-For-Performance” Adult Education funding. If a renewal is introduced, advocate for measures to prevent potential “creaming”, versus equal access and expansion of eligibility to **include adult education providers** who are not the degree granting entity
- Advocate for family literacy (2 gen approach) and English as a second language instruction made possible by the passage of 20-SB009, not just High School Equivalency instruction for immediate employment. This is important for **race equity in education** and reducing the education gap. HB21-1264’s one-time \$5 million in funding can be used for this purpose.

Goal #6: **Reduce Barriers** to Education, Training, and Employment

- Identify demographic characteristics of Coloradans are not in the workforce — a **far larger number** than those who are officially unemployed. See [Returning to Work After COVID-19](#)
- Identify **how their barriers could be reduced** through policy changes (E.g. access to child or elder care, criminal record exclusions, potential loss of disability-related support services if employed, etc.)
- Identify and build out elements of “a pathway to the pathway”. Identify how to **bridge gaps** between where people are at and where the skills training and education is happening. Highlight promising practices in this area.
- Research use of “Ability to Benefit” provisions to allow those without a high school diploma to still access a Pell grant to acquire training for **eligible career pathways**.
- Track how federal and state workforce dollars are used. Review outcomes data. Are funds reaching those in rural areas? Is there demographic data about who benefits most from increased federal and state funding- by race, age, educational level, previous or current job sectors, etc.

Goal #7: Improve **consumer information** on education and training opportunities, costs, and outcomes.

The State has been consolidating much consumer information on the My Colorado Journey website, which is helpful for those using the site. The Skills2Compete–Colorado role is to link community-based organizations helping people seeking training and employment with the work being done and opportunities available.

- Provide more information on pathways to careers, especially for adults. Education, skills acquisition, and retraining opportunities should be lifelong, and include **affordable and free options**
- Encourage the development of sector partnerships in sectors where people with barriers to employment tend to work, e.g. hospitality, retail.
- Support inclusion of **outcomes data** — program specific earnings, student loan default rates, etc. — for private occupational schools in comparative state website.
- Build on the state government work to define high quality industry recognized credentials, and learn the usefulness of credentials in the employment market:
 - Which credentials are most sought out by employers?
 - Which credentials seem to have only limited value to employers?
 - How does that information get out to jobseekers?
 - Do job seekers in rural Colorado have access to short term credentials?

Goal #8: *Link/integrate systems* to better serve people

By systems, we mean Colorado Department of Labor and workforce centers, Colorado Department of Human Services and public benefits, Department of Corrections, Department of Local Affairs, homeless service providers, Colorado Department of Education and adult education service providers, Colorado Department of Higher Education, the local community one lives in, and one's own family members. Actual people often must navigate multiple systems.

- Identify examples of systems integration with the workforce component
- Capture the landscape of system isolation vs integration in Colorado in a written report, based on interviews with staff from various agencies
- Produce a webinar on the topic

Goal #9: Advocate for improved *job quality*

Beyond channeling people into high paid, high demand, high skills jobs, we need people for work that is currently very low-paid. All workers should be able to enhance their skills and move toward self-sufficiency. Many of the jobs currently open are essential to us all, but have low pay, no flexibility, are more dangerous, and garner little respect.

- Caregivers of young and elderly need adequate pay, respect, access to benefits, and the opportunity to enhance their skills. Support such proposals.
- Advocate to employment support for **education and training** at the entry levels of their organizations. (Upskilling)
- Support access to education, training, and opportunities for upward mobility **among “gig” and contract workers.**

About *Skills2Compete–Colorado*

Skills2Compete-Colorado is a multi-sector coalition that includes representatives from adult education, post-secondary education, workforce development, business, and the advocacy arena. We are the Colorado affiliate of the *National Skills Coalition*. Through outreach, research, and advocacy, Skills2Compete promotes policies that bridge the gap between the jobs employers offer now and in the near future, and the skills that current job seekers have today. Skills2Compete focuses on skills training from adult basic education through middle-skills jobs.

Chaer Robert, Coordinator
Colorado Center on Law and Policy

789 N Sherman St #300
Denver, CO 80203

303-573-5669 x307

[@skill2competeco](https://cclponline.org/skills2compete)