



#1: Colorado Breaking Barriers to Employment Act: Integrating Local Workforce and Community Employment Services

The Issue and Need

- Interviews and surveys of workforce development centers (WDCs), public agencies (PAs) and community based organizations offering employment services (CBOs) among Colorado's workforce development areas (WDAs) revealed that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) does not provide enough resources to sufficiently serve the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment. This research represents 62 of Colorado's 64 counties.
- State investment and resources are required in order to fully integrate and connect CBOs, PAs and WDCs beyond the partnerships mandated by WIOA. Doing so is necessary so that each WDA can collectively and sufficiently serve job-seekers with barriers to employment.
- The state's large geographical size and economic diversity require locally tailored solutions to respond to specific WDA needs.
- The state is experiencing a historically low unemployment rate of 2.4 percent, and yet nearly 20 percent of prime working-age Coloradans are not working. Many current job-seekers in Colorado have significant barriers to employment. This population wants to work, but requires greater investment and resources than are currently available. This has been documented in each WDA across Colorado. This impedes the economy's growth and prevents it from reaching its full potential.
- Federal funding for workforce development initiatives (employment/training) has been reduced and further reductions have occurred with the new Federal budget. As a result, critical workforce development and other employment infrastructural resources across Colorado's 10 WDAs have been diminished, redistributed or eliminated. Colorado's CBOs have also faced reductions in funding and are largely unable to expand the menu of services and training options available to their clients in the current budgetary environment.

What would this bill do?

- Enhance the capacity of each WDA—including its CBOs, WDCs and PAs—to provide job-seekers with barriers the specialized services and resources they need to enter, participate in, and complete employment and training- related programs that are aligned with local labor market needs. Specifically this bill would require the collaboration among WDCs, PAs and CBOs within a WDA beyond WIOA's mandated partnerships to implement a plan for using the allocated funds that strengthens their ability to serve the target population.
- Allocate \$3,000,000 beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2018-2019 from the General Fund, and each FY thereafter for five years to the identified state department. The state department shall allocate the funds to each of Colorado's 10 WDAs in a manner similar to the distribution of the Employment Support Fund with input from a statewide association of county commissioners. Gifts, grants and donations may also be accepted.
- Allocate an additional \$600,000 to rural communities in recognition of the significant challenges facing these areas of Colorado.
- Target formerly incarcerated individuals and those experiencing homelessness, refugees and immigrants eligible to work, the long-term unemployed, those living in poverty, youth transitioning out of foster care and other populations with barriers to employment.
- Allow for WDCs, CBOs and PAs within each WDA to serve individuals with barriers to employment who are seeking a job by enhancing and expanding their infrastructure in areas such as specific services, training and staff capacity.
 - Examples may include, but are not limited to: hiring clinical staff to support participants' employment needs; upgrading information technology and equipment; developing staff technological skills; expanding business development and community outreach capacity; providing job-retention services to employed individuals who would not receive them otherwise; implementing new training programs and supporting local CBOs that respond to new business and job opportunities.
- Establish a public comment period for stakeholders to offer input prior to the program's launch date.
- Require the state agency to provide guidance to each WDA to ensure legislative compliance with their usage of the funds appropriated.
- Require a sunset review process at the end of FY 2022-2023 by the General Assembly for renewal.

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Supporting Organizations
Bayaud Enterprises
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Cross Disability Coalition
CWEE
People's Advocacy Council
Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning

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Skills2Compete-Colorado is a multisector policy coalition focused on skill acquisition for employment. Our members include staff from community based employment programs, adult education providers, workforce center staff, state agencies, community colleges, businesses, and advocacy organizations.