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**HOMEGROWN TALENT INITIATIVE AWARDS \$750,000 FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

*Career-Connected Learning Opportunities Rooted in Rural Communities*

**Denver, CO – August 12, 2020** – For the past year, rural communities across Colorado have been working on setting a new vision for their students and local economies. Community design teams made up of superintendents, business leaders, educators, students, and community members have spent countless hours working with Colorado Succeeds and the Colorado Education Initiative through the [Homegrown Talent Initiative](#) (HTI) to build a unique plan to better prepare students for post-secondary opportunities, based on the strengths and needs of their community.

Given the unprecedented challenges of the past several months, it is more important than ever to invest in agile and innovative career-connected learning opportunities for students. HTI is pleased to announce its commitment to investing in rural communities across Colorado. Supported by the generosity of the Daniels Fund, the Walton Family Foundation, Gill Foundation, and the Adolph Coors Foundation, HTI will award \$750,000 in direct investments to seven rural communities for the 2020-2021 school year.

In addition to the above funders, communities were also asked to raise matching funds for their projects. We are encouraged by, and appreciative of, all the local organizations and foundations supporting our communities, including Climax Molybdenum, Clear Creek School District Foundation, El Pomar Foundation, and many others.

Through the Homegrown Talent Initiative, schools, communities, and local businesses will launch implementation plans that focus on career-connected learning and provide a variety of post-secondary opportunities for students. These plans include internship programs, certificate courses, concurrent enrollment with higher education institutions, capstone projects, and career exploration opportunities for elementary and middle school students. Several communities have also developed strategies for both in-person and distance learning opportunities, given the uncertainty of the school year. Each school also developed a Graduate Profile, highlighting the skills and competencies they aim to instill in their students through Homegrown Talent Initiative programming.

“This has been a wonderful and encouraging year for us individually, as a Homegrown Talent Initiative team, and as a community. We are truly inspired to partake in this journey and look forward to what the future holds for Holyoke,” said Summer Maloney, Holyoke School Board Secretary and Homegrown Talent Initiative team lead.

The following five communities will receive funding to implement Homegrown Talent Initiative efforts in their local school districts in the 2020-2021 school year:

- **Clear Creek** - to increase career and technical education (CTE) and certificate offerings, such as *Project BikeTech*, certifications, as well as introduce capstone projects and career pathways exploration
- **Elizabeth** - to partner with local businesses for internships and apprenticeship opportunities, a flexible schedule to better support students pursuing work-based opportunities, and expanded certificate courses
- **Fremont RE-2** - to build relationships among students and businesses through internships and work-based learning, as well as invest in professional development for educators to better engage with career-connected learning opportunities for students
- **Grand County** - to explore and identify students’ professional interests and possible career pathways through internships, expose students to diverse career options, and support career entry and progression
- **Holyoke** - to introduce internships and capstones as part of curriculum and create career pathway options with input from students, teachers, and the local economy

Two additional communities will continue to receive support and funding through HTI for additional planning before implementing their plans:

- **Durango** - to enhance work-based learning opportunities for students that align with career interests and meet needs of the local economy
- **Montezuma-Cortez** - to restructure graduation requirements to better align with career pathways, student interests, and CTE offerings

“The Homegrown Talent Initiative is a unique opportunity that brings education and business leaders, parents, and students together to set young people up for success and invest in the local economy. The Daniels Fund is committed to supporting impactful and creative programs like HTI, and we look forward to seeing how this partnership among Colorado Succeeds, the Colorado Education Initiative, and rural communities better prepares students for post-secondary career success and paves the way for continued innovations in education,” said Kristin Todd, Executive Vice President of Grants Programs & Operations, Daniels Fund.

Community design teams will continue to receive coaching and technical assistance from Colorado Succeeds and the Colorado Education Initiative throughout the year. These communities will also benefit from the knowledge and resource sharing of a network of other communities working on similar initiatives.

"In the past year, we've supported communities coming together to build a shared vision of a new future," said Rebecca Holmes, President & CEO of the Colorado Education Initiative. "Our recovery in Colorado will be driven by passion, talent, and new ideas from local leadership and we are thrilled to work and learn alongside these communities."

"The commitment each community has shown to reimagining what's possible for their students, families, and local business community should inspire us all," said Colorado Succeeds President Scott Laband. "We know that when students see value and relevance in what they are learning they become more hopeful about their future. In these challenging times, the next generation of problem solvers is exactly what we need."

### **About Homegrown Talent Initiative**

The [Homegrown Talent Initiative](#) is a statewide partnership that supports regional cohorts of communities to create homegrown, career-connected learning experiences for K-12 students aligned to the needs and aspirations of their local economies. Through facilitated technical assistance, coaching, and asset mapping, communities will build homegrown opportunity pathways to serve the unique needs of students, families, schools, business, and industry.

Homegrown Talent Initiative is facilitated by [Colorado Succeeds](#) and [the Colorado Education Initiative](#) (CEI), and supported by the Daniels Fund, Walton Family Foundation, Gill Foundation, and Adolph Coors Foundation.

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