



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**ORGANIZATIONS COMBINE EFFORTS TO LAUNCH HOMEGROWN TALENT INITIATIVE**  
*Community-Led Development of Innovative Learning Pathways Takes Root in Rural Colorado*

**Denver, CO – December 12, 2019** – Imagine families, schools, businesses, and higher education coming together to support high school students in finding their passions, engaging with their community in deep ways, and developing new skills and competencies while attaining the certifications necessary to achieve a full range of post-secondary pathways. From the Eastern Plains to the Southwest corner of the state, communities across Colorado aren't just imagining new futures for their kids – they are building them.

The Homegrown Talent Initiative (HTI) is a new 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. ***Facilitated by Colorado Succeeds and the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) and supported by the Daniels Fund, Walton Family Foundation, and Gill Foundation, the initiative kicked off in September with eight rural communities selected to participate in the 2019-20 school year.***

“Through our advocacy work and The Succeeds Prize, we’ve identified some of the most innovative and impactful partnerships between K-12, higher education, and employers,” said Scott Laband, president of Colorado Succeeds. “Time and again, we have witnessed the value that can be generated for kids and communities when these diverse partners come together in substantive ways to design relevant, career-connected learning experiences for every student. Kids are more engaged in their learning, more successful in building skills and competencies, and more thoughtful about their future academic and career pathways. I’m grateful for the community members who are leading this critical work and the local funders who have invested in supporting them.”

“We believe this collective work is essential to fully prepare all students and communities for the future – especially a future that requires lifelong learning,” said Rebecca Holmes, president and CEO of Colorado Education Initiative. “CEI has been honored to work with many of these districts in some capacity over the past decade and we’re absolutely energized by the opportunity to lead the implementation process with so many critical partners at the table in each community. I think Colorado is leading the country on building community-led solutions that will have a lasting impact on not just the schools but also the economic vitality of our rural regions, which generates real opportunity for our entire state.”

HTI is designed to be an accelerant for the local leaders who are taking this work on with an eye toward innovation and collaboration in their communities. “The Daniels Fund looks closely at organizations and projects that will have an impact. When we see education and business leaders, parents, and students coming together to set their young people up for success and rejuvenate their local economy, we know that we are funding a project that will jumpstart change. The Homegrown Talent Initiative is a direct and focused attempt to catalyze innovation in education and help communities create workable solutions to suit their unique needs and environment – empowering communities to improve student outcomes,” said Linda Childears, president and CEO, Daniels Fund.

The communities were selected through an application process by CEI and Colorado Succeeds to collaborate to *design* and *implement* ways to tap into the local talent while students are still in middle and high school. Through "Seeing is Believing" tours, participants will learn from leaders in Cañon City and St. Vrain Valley Schools - communities that have pioneered important work in this space. Through facilitated technical assistance, coaching, and asset mapping, communities will be asked to address the dynamic changes in Colorado, and help build homegrown opportunity pathways to serve the unique needs of students, families, schools, business, and industry.

**The eight communities selected for the 2019-20 school year are:**

- Durango - Design team led by: Brandon Thurston, CTE administrator, Durango School District 9-R and Melinda Wood, parent in Durango School District
- Montezuma-Cortez - Design team led by: Lori Haukeness, superintendent, Montezuma-Cortez School District
- Grand County - Design team led by: Frank Reeves, superintendent, East Grand School District and Darrin Peppard, superintendent, West Grand School District
- Prowers County - Design team led by: Tara Hosick, director, Prowers Economic Prosperity
- Clear Creek - Design team led by: Karen Quanbeck, superintendent, Clear Creek School District
- Elizabeth - Design team led by: Dave Eddy, colorado site director, Boeing and Michelle Rink, executive director, Elizabeth Area Chamber of Commerce
- Fremont RE-2 -Design team led by: Dr. Brenda Krage, superintendent, Fremont RE-2 School District
- Holyoke - Design team led by: Kyle Stumpf, superintendent, Holyoke School District

“With the Homegrown Talent Initiative, I think that this is going to impact our schools and our students dramatically,” said Trisha Herman, economic development director at Phillips County. “The collaboration between economic development, our business community, and the school districts all goes hand-in-hand and ties together. We want to be able to create opportunity for our students to be able to not just have that four-year degree, but also how we can educate our students on a work pathway for getting into a career that they are interested in. We want it to be innovative.”

The community design teams will work with [Colorado Succeeds](#) and the [Colorado Education Initiative](#) through Fall 2020 where they will receive technical assistance, travel and convening stipends, connections with other communities across the state working on similar initiatives, and be eligible for potential future partnership for deeper implementation support.

**About Colorado Succeeds:** Colorado Succeeds is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to ensure all kids are educated to their greatest potential and all businesses have the homegrown talent they need to thrive. Since 2006, Colorado Succeeds has connected leaders in business, education, and government to advocate for students and their futures. Through initiatives in policy, practice, and philanthropy, Colorado Succeeds supports educators who are innovating in the classroom and policymakers who are changing the system to support student success.

**About Colorado Education Initiative:** Since its inception in 2007, CEI (formerly the Colorado Legacy Foundation) has played a pivotal role in advancing critical initiatives in Colorado’s public education system as a key partner to the Colorado Department of Education. Ten years later, CEI has established innovative partnerships with districts and schools that give educators a meaningful role in driving sustainable improvement in public education. CEI has a multi-faceted role serving as implementation expert, innovation thought leader, and state-wide convener and trusted partner. CEI’s work is grounded in a long-term vision that every student in Colorado is prepared and unafraid to succeed in school, work and life, and ready to take on the challenges of today, tomorrow, and beyond.