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New Partnerships Boost STEM Career-Building Programs for Colorado Students

Grants support Delta and Poudre high school students in STEM education

DENVER, CO – While Colorado has one of the most highly-skilled labor pools in the country, businesses still rely on recruiting talent from outside the state to meet the demand in occupations that require higher levels of skill in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

[The Colorado Education Initiative](#) (CEI) has partnered with the [Colorado Workforce Development Council](#) (CWDC) to support students on Colorado's western slope in Delta High School and northern Colorado's Poudre High to develop the skills they need to succeed in middle-skill STEM careers in advanced manufacturing.

With more than \$60,000 in funding and support from [JPMorgan Chase](#) and [The Women's Foundation of Colorado](#) (WFCO), CEI and CWDC will support the development and expansion of STEM career tracks for more than 450 students.

The two schools will offer students specialized training in advanced manufacturing positions such as a machinist, welder, or engineering technician. Targeted recruitment focuses on attracting under-represented populations like young women and low-income students to ensure that students participating in the training mirror the schools' demographics.

WFCO's mission focuses on building resources and leading change so that every woman and girl can achieve their full potential.

"We are pleased that Delta and Poudre high schools will prioritize recruitment and support for young women and low-income students in their STEM-career programs," said **WFCO Vice President of Community Initiatives & Investments, Louise Myrland**. "Colorado is experiencing a shortage of middle-skilled workers for jobs that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree, like manufacturing, healthcare, or construction. By creating a career track toward these jobs, we empower women and girls to pursue careers that can lead to economic independence and opportunity, along with greater lifetime earnings."

New partnerships between local schools and leaders in business, higher education, and nonprofits are making a difference for students.

"We have a highly innovative teacher who belongs to the [Northern Colorado Manufacturing Partnership](#), made up of local industry and community college representatives, so we're able to have one foot in local industry and one foot in education," said **Poudre High School Principal Kathy Mackay**.

Poudre is also hosting field trips for students and parents to tour different industry sites, offering a fresh perspective on the manufacturing industry that challenges outdated assumptions. "These jobs require high



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technical skills. Many people are surprised by the state-of-the-art warehouses these companies run,” said Mackay.

Through the program, Poudre has created a high school agriculture program. “Our community is built on agriculture,” said Mackay. “In 2015-16, we’re developing career tracks in agriculture mechanics, animal science, and plant systems.”

Delta will use the grant to offer student career planning and to help students connect to local industry professionals. “We have a great STEM industry in welding and manufacturing, but because we are a small community, we exhaust our community connections quickly,” **said Delta High School Principal Derek Carlson**. “We’re excited to use the grant to expand into an online platform that connects our students to engineers in the field and uses technology to link them to workplaces around the state.”

Colorado has a higher share of STEM careers than the national average and is expected to see above average growth in jobs that require STEM skills over the next decade.

“This project allows schools to expand access to Colorado’s STEM career opportunities to more students, particularly to students currently underrepresented in STEM occupations,” said CEI President and CEO **Glenna Norvelle**. “We have an opportunity to help our state’s schools strengthen their STEM education experiences in meaningful ways. The STEM skills our students learn now are a critical component to support innovation in medium and high skill occupations in industries like agriculture, aeronautics, manufacturing, and engineering.”

The CWDC is also a critical partner in creating connections between Colorado’s school districts and active [Sector Partnerships](#), or industry-specific regional partnerships, with economic development, education, and workforce programs in their area. Working alongside businesses ensures that the schools offer instruction and specialized training that aligns with local industry needs.

“We work with organizations like CEI to create a business-led Colorado talent system to meet the needs of our Colorado businesses and students,” **said CWDC Director Stephanie Veck**. “The business community wants to invest in the state’s economic future and development of future talent, and we help them make those connections.”

JPMorgan Chase believes that addressing the gap in skills can be one of the most powerful tools for reducing unemployment and expanding economic opportunity.

“It’s important for us to support student career training and an education rich in STEM that helps Colorado kids develop skills to be successful,” **said Todd Munson, Colorado Market President for JPMorgan Chase**. “Kids engaged in STEM activities develop skills for the jobs of tomorrow.”

About The Colorado Education Initiative

The Colorado Education Initiative is an independent nonprofit working in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education, educators, schools, districts, and other public education stakeholders to unlock the unique potential of every student by incubating innovation, shining a spotlight on success, and investing in sustainable change that improves outcomes for all students. CEI envisions 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,



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tomorrow, and beyond.

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