



COLORADO

Office of Economic Development
& International Trade

Opportunity Now Regional Talent Summits

Northwest Region Draft Goals

June 2025

This document is the first draft of the regional workforce goals that will be included in the forthcoming Tactical Regional Workforce Plan. This document is informed by the solutions identified at the Northwestern Regional Talent Summit, and feedback gathered at this post-summit stage from summit attendees will inform the final goals represented in the plan.

Construction

2-Year Goal

Enhance early career exposure and optimize training pathways for construction occupations.

Desired Outcomes:

- Shift cultural expectations regarding career and college planning, giving learners a fuller picture of what's possible.
- Better connect students and families to local career paths within the construction industry.
- Reduce employer risk and increase participation in standardized training and apprenticeship programs.
- Ensure consistent skill sets and safety training for new hires across the industry.

Potential Tactics Identified During Summit:

- **Implement a "family narrative" approach to career college planning**, tapping into existing high school pipeline partnerships and Colorado Mountain College (CMC) resources.
- **Provide personalized career exploration options** like job shadowing and multi-day engagement programs instead of one-off career fairs.
- **Standardize and scale apprenticeship programs**, including 3:1 apprenticeship ratios and regionally coordinated training schedules.
- **Develop standardized entry-level training curricula**, establishing industry-wide competency standards for specific trades.
- **Expand apprenticeship opportunities** beyond traditional roles to include carpentry, heavy equipment operation and project management.

5-Year Goal

Build public partnerships to create clear pathways for job seekers and learners entering construction, while addressing housing stability to retain workers.

Desired Outcomes:

- Integrate construction workers into the community long-term to support retention.
- Reduce confusion and ensure employers and workers know where to turn for workforce and education programs.
- Scale construction training programs across the region.
- Retain talent and attract new workers by providing competitive wages, communicating career advancement pathways, and addressing systemic barriers like housing costs and transportation challenges.

Potential Tactics Identified During Summit:

- **Consistently advocate for legislative shifts** to support workforce development and business growth based on partnership discussions.
- Leverage intermediary support to create a structured process for agriculture businesses to **access reimbursement-based funds and grants**.
- Create a continuous improvement process to **sustain the effectiveness of the agriculture career map**.
- **Expand and integrate work-based learning experiences** across high-demand areas.
- **Strengthen connections between K-12 and postsecondary education** agriculture programs to ensure seamless transitions.
- **Sustain and expand public awareness campaigns** through partnerships with agricultural-related events and festivals.

Healthcare

2-Year Goal

Increase early awareness and create transparent career ladders and additional pathway programs within the healthcare sector.

Desired Outcomes:

- Early exposure to diverse healthcare careers beyond doctors and nurses.
- Scaled pathway programs for positions such as behavioral health and diagnostic imaging.
- Increase the likelihood of individuals entering and staying in healthcare by clarifying growth opportunities.
- Reduce fragmentation and increase access to critical healthcare workforce resources, training programs, and funding opportunities.
- Reduce long-distance travel for care and improve overall access to healthcare services.

Potential Tactics Identified During Summit:

- **Make healthcare pathways more attractive** through industry panels, storytelling, and introductory occupational education in K-12, highlighting roles that do not require a four-year degree.

- **Build transparent vertical and lateral career pathways** to welcome career changers and showcase clear advancement routes from entry-level roles.
- **Develop a diagnostic imaging training program.**
- **Develop "grow your own" approaches** for local talent pipelines with sustained funding and wraparound support.
- **Establish a single hub for healthcare workforce resources**, such as a website or database, that includes training programs and funding opportunities.

5-Year Goal

Cultivate a stable and supported healthcare workforce through collaborative partnerships and comprehensive support systems that address the cost of living and increase earn-and-learn career pathway programs.

Desired Outcomes:

- Improve workforce retention by effectively addressing unsustainable living costs and housing issues.
- Ensure service continuity and prevent the loss of institutional knowledge when key individuals transition or retire.
- Build community resilience through strong local talent pipelines that remove barriers to pursuing healthcare careers.
- Reduce staff exhaustion and high turnover rates caused by constant demands and long travel between counties.

Potential Tactics Identified During Summit:

- **Establish funding sources for loan repayment subsidies and housing** financial support for healthcare workers.
- **Foster collaboration between high schools, colleges and healthcare employers**, anchored in industry-wide commitment to ensure continuity beyond staff turnover.
- **Offer tuition reimbursement and earn-and-learn programming in behavioral health**, allowing learners to upskill and complete their degree requirements while working.
- **Develop wraparound services**, including childcare and mental health support, during healthcare training programs.
- **Create pay-for-training commitments from healthcare employers** or employer-sponsored upskilling programs for incumbent workers.

Tourism

2-Year Goal

Shift perceptions and scale training to attract and retain skilled talent in tourism roles.

Desired Outcomes:

- Reframe tourism roles as viable, respected careers rather than dead-end jobs.
- Increase access to skilled employment that is responsive to regional needs.
- Improve employees' understanding of business acumen, including profit margins and customer service.
- Reduce pressure on remaining staff and improve service quality by addressing staffing shortages.

Potential Tactics Identified During Summit:

- **Implement high school and technical school outreach**, career fairs, and storytelling campaigns to illuminate the purpose, growth potential, and impact of tourism careers.
- **Expand clear, stackable career pathways** that begin in high school and connect through CTE and college, promoting seamless transitions and recognizing credit for prior learning.
- **Embed customer service, communication, and conflict resolution training** into every level of training and education programs
- **Create "train the trainer" and mentorship programs for managers** to help employees grow in their roles and advance their careers.
- **Design intensive, short-term certification programs** that can be completed faster than traditional semester-long courses.

5-Year Goal:

Address housing and seasonal hiring challenges while scaling strategic solutions across the region to create a sustained tourism workforce.

Desired Outcomes:

- Improved worker retention and reduced burnout.
- Mitigated negative economic and community impacts caused by workforce instability, strengthening community identity and tax revenue.
- A tool to support employers and workers in seeking and hiring for seasonal roles, reducing ongoing inefficiencies year after year.
- Strengthened service and cultural awareness by leveraging a multi-generational and diverse talent pool.

Potential Tactics Identified During Summit:

- **Increase access to housing, childcare, and benefits**, investing in job quality and support infrastructure for both transient and permanent workers.
- Organize regional partners around a common message to **advocate for mandated, accessible, and sustainable legislative funding for long-term workforce development.**
- **Develop a streamlined seasonal workforce exchange** supported by coordinated systems such as matchmaking forms, shared benefits platforms, and opt-in databases.
- **Develop strategies to boost non-managerial role wages** to make positions viable long-term careers.
- **Establish a centralized hub for talent development resources.**
- Leverage existing structures (such as the Chamber Alliance) to **share and scale county-run initiatives more broadly across the region.**