Tier 1 Recommendations:

NOTE *Committee members recognized the need to prioritize a few recommendations in order to have optimal nearterm impact, and recognize that other recommendations require greater stakeholder engagement, further analysis, and/or don't require immediate legislative action to implement.*

Recommendations are in numeric order within each Tier.

<u>Revised Recommendation #1</u>
Innovation and Scaling Partnership Grants: Leverage American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, additional anticipated federal funds, and matching local, private, and philanthropic dollars to create a competitive statewide and regional grant program to spark innovation and scale proven and promising, sustainable, approaches to postsecondary, workforce and community partnerships. The program should prioritize regional, aligned partnerships that foster deep collaboration across Colorado's secondary, postsecondary, workforce and industry ecosystems to meet immediate and near-term needs and effect longer term, transformative change. This will include efforts to help address industry/sector staffing shortages and learners/earners who have suffered negative economic impacts from the pandemic and or represent traditionally disproportionately impacted communities.

A third of funding should be reserved for incubating (and evaluating) innovative approaches (aka "seeding" innovation). The remaining funds should help scale outcome-based proven and highly promising practices. The majority of dollars (roughly 80%) should be deployed regionally, with a share reserved for statewide projects. While ensuring a high threshold of excellence, the regional allocations should be dispersed with an eye towards regional and geographic equity.

The grant process should allow for feasibility and planning grants to incent deep regional stakeholder collaboration to identify locally adapted solutions, based on regional demand and metrics, that increase likelihood of broad stakeholder partnership and investment. The grant should also incorporate technical assistance and feasibility funding to eligible applicants that lack the resources or capacity to participate in competitive grant application processes. Finally, the process should be professionally-managed, streamlined and user-friendly. **Review detailed note at bottom of this recommendation.

Grants should prioritize the following outcomes:

- Approaches that incent and enhance education, workforce, and community collaboration to create high demand, high quality, high need, high ROI and equity-oriented pathways.

- Robust evidence-based approaches, including wraparound supports, that directly impact the social determinants of student success, such as food/housing insecurity, mental and physical health, social safety net programs, child care, emergency assistance, etc. An RFP should include meaningful definitions for "evidence-based," such as those defined in Senate Bill 21-284, or the evidence tiers in Colorado's combined state workforce plan under WIOA.

- Initiatives that focus on credit-transfer and application of work experience and earned credentials to postsecondary degree and certificate programs (e.g., through prior learning assessment, competency based education models, stackable credentials), which can smooth

transitions, decrease credit loss, increase affordability, and support life-long learners to successfully transition between postsecondary pathways and the workforce.

- Expanding access and opportunity for all learners, with a particular emphasis on supporting the development of valuable professional networks for those historically lacking in access to these networks. Regional collaboratives should use data to reflect the unique demographic needs of their regions.

- Pilots that utilize an **Upskilling / Reskilling Revolving Fund model**, refilled by employers hiring from the pool of those utilizing the fund through retention-driven payments.

Promising Best Practices:
- RISE Education Fund
- Sturm Collaboration Campus
- Cherry Creek Innovation Campus
- SyncUp Colorado Challenge
- New Profit

Implementation Note Committee members recommend that we learn important lessons from previous national and Colorado-based grant processes, and the following factors should be considered in the design/implementation of this recommendation:

- Dedicate significant amount of time to the design phase before releasing RFP
  - Assess existing landscape in Colorado and recent RISE/SYNC Up Awards to better understand overall state need
  - Need to be as specific as possible in stating the "design question" to get high quality applicants and to be able to compare/asses submissions
- Build as outcome-based funding where govt seeds initial investment, employers could access tax incentives to come to the table, and programs that meet outcomes get funded and are paired with policy changes create/amplify bigger theory of change
- Consider sequencing grants through multiple rounds or phase execution
  - Provide TA to strengthen round 1 submittals before submitting round 2
- Ensure assessment rubric minimizes subjectivity
  - State the criteria very specifically (e.g. partnership across stakeholders, equity etc.)
  - An RFP should include meaningful definitions for "evidence-based," such as those defined in Senate Bill 21-284, or the evidence tiers in Colorado's combined state workforce plan under WIOA.
- Having decision makers reflect a broad representation of those who would be impacted
- Include industry panel advisors to provide insight and weigh in on practicality of the projects
- For initiatives designed to effect longer-term, transformative change, evidence of likely sustainability beyond the term of the grant period should be considered.
- Finally, invite key state and national philanthropic partners to participate as grant partners in designing grant process, application, and technical assistance mechanisms to better leverage their and the state's overall impact.

(#3) Enhance Transparency of Postsecondary and Workforce Data: Invest in a Statewide Student Success Data Interface and the supporting data integrations/systems initially focused on providing IHE admin/faculty/governing boards and policy makers with easy access to actionable (both aggregated and disaggregated) student success metrics, with the long-term objective to provide access to the broader public. Use one-time money to deploy a data system with dashboards and visualizations (in an easy to understand and accessible format that enables users to drill down into the data) showcasing actionable metrics related to erasing equity gaps and increasing credential/career attainment.

In Phase 1, the data system should better equip faculty, staff, and leadership at postsecondary institutions to improve practice, better support learner/earner success, and allow Colorado to identify, communicate, and showcase promising practices. Over time, the system should provide robust economic opportunity data (specifically linked to postsecondary pathway options) to empower learners/earners as they navigate education and training options to make informed decisions regarding their economic opportunity and tradeoffs, and ultimately provide a longitudinal framework to connect across K-12, postsecondary, and workforce data.

Note that this immediate strategy to deploy a data interface/tool explicitly does not contemplate creating a new data visualization platform; one or more existing third-party platforms should be used to execute this strategy.

The data interface should ultimately and seamlessly compliment work already underway to deploy a longitudinal data system within state government that spans across the education to workforce ecosystem, building off of existing offerings like the Colorado Data Trust, the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC), and efforts undertaken by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) (such as the Individual Career & Academic Planning (ICAP) process as well as related data linking initiatives).

> **Promising Best Practices:**
> - California State University System Student Success Dashboard
> - Kentucky Center for Statistics (KY STATS)
> - Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS)
> - National Student Clearinghouse's (NSC's) Postsecondary Data Partnership ([PDP](PDP))
> - University of Texas System dashboard
> - California Community Colleges student success metrics

Implementation Note
In terms of data visualization and metrics calculation platforms, the committee believes the state should leverage state funds and negotiate a statewide procurement process rather than each individual institution of higher education negotiating their own contract. This will be a more cost effective approach. In terms of the ultimate goal of a longitudinal framework to connect across K-12, postsecondary, and workforce data, the state should build on existing related initiatives as well as providing funding and staffing to ensure success.

(#8 with content incorporated from #16) Develop Stackable Credential/Work-Based Learning Pathways: Legislation to inspire large-scale expansion of industry-valued, stackable, credential pathways in high need, high value fields/industries as identified annually through the Talent Pipeline Report and aligned with consumer/ industry demand. Seamless pathways and clear roadmaps into meaningful, remunerative employment will help guide Coloradans from high school into the workforce, service, or further education--with opportunities to move between education and work in response to a changing economy and evolving personal and family needs. Legislation shall leverage incentives as well as requirements for increased consumer transparency of pathway outcomes (akin to calorie counts on restaurant menus).

For each of the high need, high value fields/industries identified annually through the Talent Pipeline Report, CDHE & CWDC, in collaboration with OEDIT (and/or an independent intermediary) shall work with a diverse set of relevant industry representatives to identify a corresponding assessment which enables students to demonstrate mastery of skills relevant to the field and valued by a representative group of employers hiring in the field. Then postsecondary faculty at CTE, 2- and 4-year institutions, representatives of business/industry and trade associations, CDHE, CCCS, CWDC, CDE, the Office of the Future of Work, and the State Office of Career & Technical Education shall collaboratively design educational pathways which enable students to gain the skills necessary to pass the corresponding assessments. These high quality, portable, stackable, and permeable pathways should include learning experiences and industry recognized skill development opportunities that begin in high school and extend through credential attainment and employment.

Pathways may continue into degree programs, but should be valued and valuable on their own without required connections to degrees. Since pathways are not necessarily linear they should allow for movement between degree programs, certificate programs, and/or work with minimal loss of time or credit.

Where applicable, technical credentials should be eligible to seamlessly articulate or transfer directly into credential/degree pathways, *and* should have equal value and merit in the postsecondary ecosystem individually (or as steps along a continuum of learning and career advancement). Legislation should also address how prior learning experiences are assessed and how credit is awarded and transferred across Colorado public institutions, with resources devoted to accelerating the "college credit for work experience" implementation of HB20-1002. This recommendation should be explicitly mindful about not creating disparate pathways for low income and underserved learners but rather enhancing all pathways to benefit all learners and close economic opportunity and equity gaps.

Promising Best Practices:
- CSU Global
- Ohio Department of Higher Education

Implementation Notes
The committee believes that aligned work from K12 through higher ed and the workforce is essential. Additionally, incentive funding should be provided to education providers (like CCCS, and 4-year institutional partners where applicable) to map a comprehensive system. Funding should be tied to direct employer engagement to identify needs and co-create pathways. A third-party convenor could help coordinate efforts, provide technical assistance, and drive accountability.

(Revised #14 with content incorporated from #17) **Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Require postsecondary institutions to submit a four-year plan, with a detailed budget, to eliminate racial, regional and socio-economic equity gaps in credential attainment and other measures of student success. Rigorously evaluate existing and proposed initiatives to assess their impact on closing equity gaps and then resource those efforts with one-time funds (amplified via the Innovation and Scaling Partnership Grant proposed in Recommendation #1), with an emphasis on providing intensive wrap-around supports that reflect proven practices that substantially increase degree and credential attainment for learners (in particular learners of color, learners in poverty, and first-generation students). This should include aligned professional development for all members of the faculty, staff, and administration, and commensurate investments in staff.

The CCHE, institutional Chief Financial Officers (CFO) and other stakeholders should continue to enhance the existing funding formula with the goal of incentivizing/improving completion rates and reducing equity gaps in credential completion, time to degree, and number of attempted credits for historically underrepresented students (i.e. students of color, first generation, low income, etc.). Coupled with revenues from increased retention, new student enrollments, and possible further federal investments to advance student success, these resources should be structured to make investments in equity and student support both self-sustaining and scalable.

   Promising Best Practices:
- CDHE's [Office of Educational Equity](#), Equity Champions Coalition, and [Equity Toolkit](#)
- CWDC's [Talent Equity Agenda](#)
- [Center for Law and Social Policy](#)

Implementation Note
The committee recognizes that addressing equity is both a recommendation in this specific case, but is also the end state that we are addressing through all other recommendations. In this recommendation, the onus is on institutions to clearly identify how institutions are moving forward with a holistic and actionable talent equity agenda for the student and campus level.

To best identify and define equity gaps, the CCHE should exercise its authority to ensure coordination among all institutions of higher education. Definitions and efforts should build on the work of CDHE's Office of Educational Equity and Equity Champions Coalition and complement related work done by other state agencies. This work should be used in conversations with institutional CFOs and other stakeholders to further enhance the funding formula and ensure alignment in all work and directives undertaken by CCHE around the topic of equity. Additionally, this work should be included in the CCHE/CDHE updated strategic plan/dashboard.

Tier 2 Recommendations:

Note *Recommendations are in numeric order within each Tier.*

(#5) Align State Organizational Structures: Eliminate state silos, increase efficiency/effectiveness, and significantly enhance coordinated strategic focus on developing economic opportunity by creating a newly organized Talent Office of Department of Postsecondary Learning and Workforce Success that includes Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), and workforce-related pathway components of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment (CDLE) that focus on the P-20 spectrum. This would be a newly combined/consolidated agency that is net-neutral in terms of overall departments within state government.

> **Promising Best Practices:**
> - Virginia's [Report on Higher Education and Workforce Alignment](#)
> - Missouri Governor's [Executive Order on Aligning Higher Education and Workforce Development Functions](#)
> - [Does the United States Need a Department of Talent?](#) (Jamie Merisotis of Lumina Foundation and "America Needs Talent")

(#7) Develop New Statewide Success Measures: CCHE to develop policy that requires development of new success measures, in collaboration with IHE's and other key stakeholders, which directly align with the primary reason over 90% of students pursue postsecondary education - to earn access to enhanced professional opportunities. These new success measures must extend beyond credential attainment to examine the impact postsecondary pathways have on a student's career attainment and must shine light on progress toward addressing equity gaps in job placement and career attainment. A variety of specific success measures such as post-secondary value, placement rates, financial ROI, price-to-earnings premium, and postsecondary employment outcomes should be considered.

> **Promising Best Practices:**
> - [91% of students pursue postsecondary education to improve employment opportunities](#)
> - [Postsecondary Value Commision](#)
> - [Price-to-Earnings Premium](#)
> - [Postsecondary Employment Outcomes](#)

(#9) Create Credential Clearinghouse: Legislation and funding to create a Colorado clearinghouse to evaluate and endorse credential programs that can become eligible for state and federal funding and can be built into education/workforce pathways. Credentials would be regularly evaluated for efficacy, cost effectiveness, return on investment, and potential duplication. This could be built into existing offerings like Colorado's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and national best practices highlighted by Credential Engine. Funds should be made available to support faculty course review and administrative support at institutions of higher education so that transfer review can be completed in compliance with accreditation and institutional policy.

Promising Best Practices:
- [Colorado's ETPL](#)
- Credential Engine [Registry](#)
- Credential Engine's [policy brief](#)
- National Skills Coaltion's [work](#) around quality non-degree credentials
- Education Quality Outcome Standards ([EQOS](#))

(#10) Create Postsecondary Intermediary: Welcome/Applaud the creation of an independent Colorado-based statewide intermediary funded by philanthropic/corporate funds that fosters (at scale) education to workforce collaboration to facilitate academic/career alignment and ensure clear applicability/transferability to high-value/quality credential completion and family living-wage employment. To be clear, this effort would not exist within an existing state agency/department requiring state general fund or state staffing. Intermediary organizations can forge connections between disparate systems and organizations to advance a comprehensive systems-change vision and action, serving as neutral conveners and facilitators. The intermediary would help drive statewide prior learning assessment strategy utilizing competency mapping, deep industry collaboration, and aligned K-12 and postsecondary pathway development, utilizing shared data to evaluate progress, continuous improvement, systemic advocacy, and marketing/communications strategies to drive collaborative action.

Promising Best Practice:
- [Colorado Education Initiative (K12 focus)](#)
- [Alabama Possible (Higher Ed Focus)](#)
- [Achieve60AZ (K12-Higher Ed Focus](#))
- [MyFUTURENC (Higher Ed-Workforce Focus)](#)
- [Colorado Intermediary Study (AMC Consulting)](#)

(#12) Blur the Boundaries Between High School, Postsecondary and Workforce: Create a flexible legislative structure, a package of policy waivers, and/or other incentives to expand innovative high school, postsecondary and workforce options and pathways (CTE, Concurrent/Dual Enrollment, AP/IB, work-based learning, credential completion, apprenticeships, co-ops and related experiences, etc.) with a focus on high need, high demand, high value, industry focused pathways and to better understand what programs are demonstrating success in terms of access and outcomes. Consider consolidating disparate streams of funding for programs such as PTECH, Concurrent Enrollment, ASCENT, etc. Include a framework for statewide counselor/navigator corps to provide robust student supports that are necessary for expansion. Expand the Career Development Incentive Fund (currently administered by CDE), which provides school districts with financial incentives for industry credentials and high quality work-based learning experiences completed by students in grades 10-14. Ensure that K12 outcomes include options for workforce aligned postsecondary pathways in each district's menu of options.

Promising Best Practices:
- [Colorado State Plan (CTE)](#)
- [CDE HS Options](#)
- [Texas early college high school framework](#)

(#13) Grow Competency-Based Education: Craft legislation and policy initiatives that remove barriers to enable consistent, validated competency-based education models to support skills-based demonstration of learning as opposed to seat time through assessment and validation of learning through formal coursework, work experience, apprenticeship, co-ops, internship, self study, etc. Competency based approaches should be aligned to both academic/credit-bearing activities and vocational/workforce/employment outcomes and applied skills. This recommendation must allow for statewide transfer within the general education core (GT Pathways) and/or applicability to statewide transfer agreements. CBE frameworks should also align with K12 graduation competencies. Additionally, K12 should consider expansion of the Innovative Learning Opportunities Pilot from SB 19-216, which allows competency based approaches to learning in K12 that could align with a higher ed model.

Although this recommendation did not rise to the Tier 1 recommendations, Alignment Committee members recognize that in order to achieve broad adoption of stackable/seamless pathways and better alignment between secondary and postsecondary ecosystems where work-based learning is valued, we need to build upon Colorado's competency-based framework for graduation requirements, which have not been fully implemented.

> **Promising Best Practices:**
> - [Competency-Based Education Network](#)
> - [Western Governors University](#)
> - [University of Wisconsin Flexible Option](#)
> - [Proficiency-Based Models in Massachusetts Schools](#)

(#17) Create a Strategic Talent Finance Plan: Task state leaders from institutions of higher education and industry to identify options for additional, sustainable funding for postsecondary education, with the goal of making Colorado's postsecondary learning ecosystem the best in the nation by 2030. This work would explicitly address systemic funding inequities by identifying additional resources through innovative approaches and partnerships between postsecondary education and industry. Specifically, the Commission should utilize the statutory mandated 5-year review process of the higher education funding formula to address base inequities and work with stakeholders to explore alternative funding mechanisms, which may include consideration of an Upskilling/Reskilling fund (see recommendation #1). The state would develop a strategic talent finance plan to ensure the system can address the economic needs of the state and those highlighted in the Colorado Commission on Higher Education's Strategic Plan. This work would be most successful with a statewide, collaborative information-campaign and strategy.

> **Promising practices/ Policy:**
>
> - [Urban Wire/ JP Morgan Chase](#)
> - [American Progress](#)
> - [CARA Collective](#)
> - [QUESTA Foundation](#)

Tier 3 Recommendations:
Note *Recommendations are in numeric order within each Tier.*

(#2) Fund Implementation Oversight and Reporting For Task Force Recommendations: Fund Colorado Department of Higher Education staff to evaluate and report on the implementation of recommendations from the task force to key stakeholders, state agencies and the broader public. This oversight would ensure implementation of each proposal has the right metrics for success, sustainability and ability to scale.

(#4) Empower Individual Ownership of Learner/Earner Educational and Skills-Based Records: Develop an ecosystem to empower learners/earners to have agency and ownership of their data on their education and employment journeys. The data in this ecosystem are owned by the learner and validated by various stakeholders across education, training, workforce, and industry to demonstrate proof of learning and skills development over the course of an individual's education and career. This could be built on top of existing offerings like the myColorado, My Colorado Journey, and blockchain-related efforts supported by the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) and the Office of Information Technology (OIT). This effort should integrate the K12 Individual Career & Academic Planning (ICAP) framework.

> **Promising Best Practices:**
> - Insights from CDHE's work on blockchain applicability in education settings
> - Insights from the Governor's Blockchain Council
> - Build off efforts at OIT (via myColorado as a digital wallet) and/or CWDC (via My Colorado Journey and the Colorado Data Trust)
> - GreenLight and their work in Texas to instantly and securely share academic credentials and records with educational institutions, employers, and others
> - Maryville University (Pistis) and ODEM platform being used in European countries

(#6) Refactor Institution of Higher Education Governance & Funding Formula: Legislation that creates a process/evaluation mechanism that considers the complexity of postsecondary governance and explores economies of scale in service delivery by consolidating institutions/governing boards and/or explores other options to strengthen Colorado's overall postsecondary ecosystem and enhances overall quality for students and delivery efficiency of academic services throughout Colorado's ecosystem of Higher Education and/or incentivize institutions with significant one-time funds to proactively unify their campuses/systems to streamline services to Colorado communities. Consequently, we need to reimagine our existing funding formula and strengthen performance funding to focus more intently on successful outcomes of students, and equity metrics.

(#11) Licensure Exam Alignment and Support: Legislation that requires IHEs to identify those programs, or areas of concentration within programs (such as accounting, finance, health professions, or education), that lead directly to licensure, and to publicize the elements of the program that are connected directly to the knowledge and competencies assessed in licensure exams, including curricular and co-curricular support strategies designed to promote student success on exams. Work with the Department of Regulatory Affairs (DORA) and Colorado Department of Education (CDE), and other

relevant entities to streamline licensure, clinical and education requirements, including cross-state licensure. Degree programs that are aligned to licensure exams will articulate to students how the program prepares them for licensure, including alignment of courses to licensure and curricular and co-curricular support strategies designed to promote student success.

(#15) Create Wrap Around Services Portal: Adequately support a statewide portal that helps students solve their food, transportation, housing and financial insecurity challenges. The portal will require one-time and recurring expenditures to create a web portal and hire staff (professional and outreach) that can assist students in addressing the social determinants of student success in tandem with their education to workforce pathways. Require evaluation of return on investment and student success outcomes of wrap around services portal. This could be built on top of existing offerings like Colorado's 2-1-1 System, MyColorado Journey platform and create connections between education, workforce, and human services.

The Alignment Committee placed a high premium on the need for proven practice in wrap-around supports and the need for adequate funding, since evidence-based supports are frequently more time and staff intensive. Although the committee appreciates the long term vision layed out in this recommendation they felt a higher priority should be improving/scaling wrap-around supports at individual institutions. Consequently, this recommendation was moved to a lower Tier, and Recommendations 1 and 14 were enhanced to place greater emphasis on the need for scaling evidence based wrap-around support models.

> **Promising Best Practices:**
> - Colorado's 2-1-1 System
> - Tools provided through My Colorado Journey
> - Single Stop, and unique Single Stop work at MSU Denver, CU Denver, Community College of Aurora, and other campuses.

These Recommendations Are being Dropped from Tier 1 - 3
(We have merged essential elements into the Policy Frame of the report and/or have merged with other Recommendations:)

Merged with Rec 8:   **(#16) Launch Seamless Transfer Initiative:** Legislation to create a new Colorado Seamless Transfer Taskforce, which would work in partnership with CDHE, CCCS, and business/industry. Membership would include business and industry representatives, faculty from all institutions of higher education, CWDC, the Office of the Future of Work, and the State Office of Career & Technical Education. The focus of this task force would be to bring together CTE, work-related experiences and credentials, degree programs, and credit and non-credit bearing coursework to address how learning is assessed and credit is awarded and transferred across Colorado public institutions.

- At minimum this task force would:
    - Dedicate resources to accelerate the "college credit for work experience" legislation from HB 20-1002.

- Create a robust stackable credential framework, with incentives for high demand, high value, high wage industries as highlighted in the Talent Pipeline Report.
- Provide incentives to Community Colleges to develop short-term credentials and PLA options, with transferability options.
- Create process/mechanism for creating highly visible and student/learner friendly transfer database that includes WBL, PLA, apprenticeships, short term credentials and stackable opportunities.
- Ensure technical assistance mechanisms are embedded that are in partnership with business and industry to ensure that PLA approvals, credit transfer agreements, or other pathway development that is created is responsive to the needs of industry and at the speed of industry.