



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# 2020-21 Workforce Diploma Pilot Program

Submitted to:

**The House Education Committee, House Business Affairs Committee, House Labor Committee,  
Senate Education Committee, and Senate Business, Labor, and Technology Committee  
of the Colorado General Assembly**

By:

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November 2021

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## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	#3
Program Overview	#4
Qualified Providers	#4
Provider Proposed Reimbursements	#5
Outcomes	#5
Conclusion	#7

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## Executive Summary

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Approximately 320,000 adults in Colorado currently do not have a high school credential. To meet workforce goals for future economic growth, these Coloradans need to be reengaged in education. The Workforce Diploma Pilot Program ([HB19-1236](#); C.R.S. 22-10.3-101) was established during the 2019 legislative session to support Colorado adults ages 21 and older without a high school credential. The pilot was authorized to operate for three fiscal years (FY 2019-2020 through FY 2021-2022), overseen by the Office of Adult Education Initiatives (AEI) at the Colorado Department of Education. In FY 2020-2021 the state legislature appropriated \$200,000 for qualified reimbursements, which resulted in 49 adults earning their high school diploma.



## Program Overview

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FY 2020-2021 was the second year of the three-year Workforce Diploma Pilot Program, which provides options for adults to earn a high school diploma and other credentials at no cost from qualified providers.

In order to be eligible to participate in the program, adults must:

- Be at least 21 years old;
- Be a resident of Colorado; and
- Not have a high school diploma.

Qualified providers may request reimbursement for each eligible adult's completion or attainment of the following outcomes:

- Attainment of an accredited high school diploma - \$1,000;
- Completion of a high school half-credit - \$250;
- Completion of an employability skills certification program equal to at least one Carnegie unit - \$250;
- Attainment of an industry-recognized credential requiring up to 50 hours of training - \$250;
- Attainment of an industry-recognized credential requiring 51-100 hours of training - \$500; or
- Attainment of an industry-recognized credential requiring more than 100 hours of training - \$750.

All qualified providers must provide services at no cost to eligible adults.

## Qualified Providers

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To be eligible for this program, qualified providers must be:

- A public, nonprofit, or private accredited, diploma-granting institution with at least two years of experience providing adult dropout recovery services, including recruitment, learning plan development, and proactive coaching and mentoring; or
- A local education provider, defined in C.R.S. 22-10-103(7), as an entity that provides appropriate and effective adult education and literacy programs recognized by the Department of Education.

In FY 2019-2020, six organizations were designated as qualified providers. During the FY 2020-2021 call for providers, three additional organizations applied. Two of those organizations\* were approved for a total of eight qualified providers in FY 2020-2021:

- Broomfield Library Career Online High School\*
- Colorado Mountain College
- GlobalEd Solutions
- Graduation Alliance
- McLain Community High School - Jefferson County Public Schools
- Mesa County Libraries Adult Learning Center\*
- Pikes Peak Library District Adult Education
- Pueblo City-County Library District



## Provider Proposed Reimbursements

Prior to the start of FY 2020-2021, AEI collected the number of outcomes and associated reimbursement amounts each qualified provider expected to submit throughout the program year. At this time, the COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning, and the financial impacts were not yet known, so providers anticipated \$1,000,000 to be available for qualified reimbursements, the same as the prior program year. Ultimately the Colorado General Assembly appropriated \$200,000 for reimbursements to qualified providers in FY 2020-2021. Table 1 shows the originally proposed reimbursements, which exceeded the \$200,000 appropriated.

Under current law, qualified providers could request FY 2020-2021 reimbursement for outcomes eligible adults earned from July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. However, by the September 2020 reimbursement deadline, there were not enough funds remaining to fully reimburse the qualified providers that submitted requests. State statute (section 22-10.3(103)(6)(a), C.R.S.) contemplates this situation and states that, “if available appropriations are insufficient to satisfy all invoices received by the submission date, the department shall reduce all payments by the same percentage until the money is exhausted.” Following this language in the statute, any provider that submitted a request for reimbursement during September 2020 had their payment decreased accordingly, a 28 percent reduction in the total reimbursement amount submitted in September 2020. Since the \$200,000 in funds were fully expended after the September 2020 reimbursement deadline, qualified providers were not able to get reimbursed for additional outcomes that may have been achieved in FY 2020-2021.

**TABLE 1: FY 2020-21 Qualified Provider Proposed Reimbursements**

	Number of Provider Proposed Credential Outcomes	Total Provider Proposed Reimbursement Amount
High School Diploma	278	\$278,000
High School Half-Credit	3,171	\$792,750
Employability Skills Certification Program Equal to at Least One Carnegie Unit	111	\$27,750
Industry-Recognized Credential Requiring Up to 50 Hours of Training	22	\$5,500
Industry-Recognized Credential Requiring 51-100 Hours of Training	7	\$3,500
Industry-Recognized Credential Requiring More Than 100 Hours of Training	18	\$13,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,607</b>	<b>\$1,121,000</b>



## Outcomes

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The annual reporting requirements shown in Table 2 are outlined in C.R.S. 22-10.3-104. Due to data sharing and data matching limitations, this annual report contains only the qualified provider self-reported information outlined in 22-10.3-104(1). Providers must report the number of outcomes attained that were reimbursed by the program as well as the total number of adults served.

The new provider request for qualifications process spanned August – October 2020, so by the time the qualifications were reviewed and new providers approved, no funding remained for FY 2020-2021. Therefore, Broomfield Library and Mesa County Libraries, the two new providers, did not have an opportunity to submit requests for reimbursement. Other providers did not submit requests for reimbursement prior to the exhaustion of funds in September 2020.

Each provider must offer services that result in the attainment of a high school diploma, but the providers are able to self-select the other outcomes to request eligible reimbursement. In FY 2020-2021, approximately 74 percent of the total funding distributed was to reimburse qualified providers for high school half-credits, resulting in adult learners earning 661 half-credits. Approximately 22 percent of the total funding was used to reimburse providers for high school diploma attainment, resulting in 49 adult learners earning their high school diplomas. Approximately three percent of the total funding reimbursed providers for 29 employability skills certificates earned by adult learners. Less than one percent of the total funding was used to reimburse providers for adult learner attainment of four industry recognized credentials.



**TABLE 2: 2020-21 Workforce Diploma Pilot Program Outcomes Summary**

Qualified Provider	Provider Type	Total Students	High School Half-Credits	Employ-ability Skills Certificates	Industry Recognized Credentials (0-50 Hours)	Industry Recognized Credentials (51-100 Hours)	Industry Recognized Credentials (100+ Hours)	High School Diplomas	Total 2020-21 Reimbursement
<b>Broomfield Library*</b>	Library System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
<b>Colorado Mountain College</b>	College	11	0	11	0	0	0	11	\$11,634
<b>GlobalEd Solutions</b>	Private Company	42	149	0	0	0	0	0	\$37,012
<b>Graduation Alliance</b>	Private Company	155	476	17	3	1	0	37	\$142,289
<b>McLain High School (Jeffco)</b>	School District	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
<b>Mesa County Libraries*</b>	Library System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
<b>Pikes Peak Library District Adult Education</b>	Library System	9	36	1	0	0	0	1	\$9,065
<b>Pueblo City-County Library District</b>	Library or Library System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
<b>2020-21 Outcome Totals</b>		<b>217</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>

\* Approved in October 2020 after 2020-21 funding was already expended.

## Conclusion

As outlined in C.R.S. 22-10.3-101(a), research shows that as many as eighty percent of the individuals who left high school without a diploma did so for nonacademic reasons, including the need to work to support themselves or their families; becoming parents; bullying or social anxiety; or falling too far behind to graduate on time. Education is a significant economic driver; according to Columbia University economist, Henry Levin, the average cost to the state for a student who drops out of high school is \$258,240 in social services, incarceration expenses, and lost income from taxes over the individual’s lifetime. When combined with lost wages, the total opportunity cost for one high school dropout is \$755,900.

In the second year of the three-year Workforce Diploma Pilot Program, the \$200,000 investment of state funds resulted in 217 adult learners ages 21 and older accessing adult education services. Adult learners earned employability skills certificates and industry recognized credentials, and 49 adults earned their high school diplomas. These outcomes will help those adult learners and their families have a brighter economic future.