

# Northeastern Colorado Student to Career Opportunity Initiative - Project Update - June 15, 2017

**Introduction:**

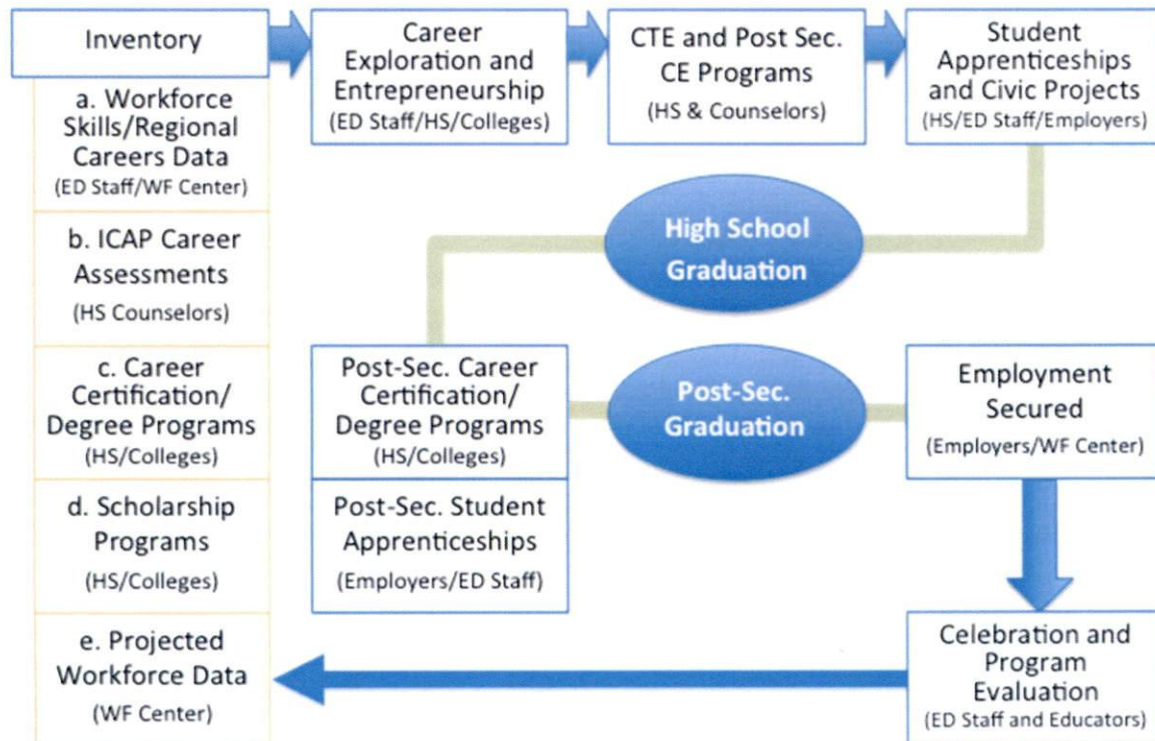
The Northeastern Colorado Student to Career Opportunity Initiative (STCO) is led by Sedgwick County Economic Development, and includes Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma Counties. We are partnering with area high schools, colleges and employers, and with regional and state resource partners, to implement this initiative on behalf of students seeking pathways to quality careers in our region and employers seeking talent with the essential skills they require.

We are actively pursuing opportunities for employers and community leaders to come along side our schools to enhance career and technical education and career readiness of students through apprenticeships, entrepreneurship education, and community service projects where youth and adults work together to improve their communities for young adults to live and work.

The Northeastern Colorado Student to Career Opportunity Initiative also addresses student retention, high school graduation, college enrollment and completion, and academic achievement disparities due to demographic, geographic and economic factors. These are addressed through engagement of our students in pursuit of their passions and abilities in ways that develop the skills they need to be successful in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, and as entrepreneurs mentored by successful business owners and managers in our region.

The diagram below outlines the key STCO elements being implemented in Northeast Colorado.

## Student to Career Opportunity Initiative Framework



## Progress to Date:

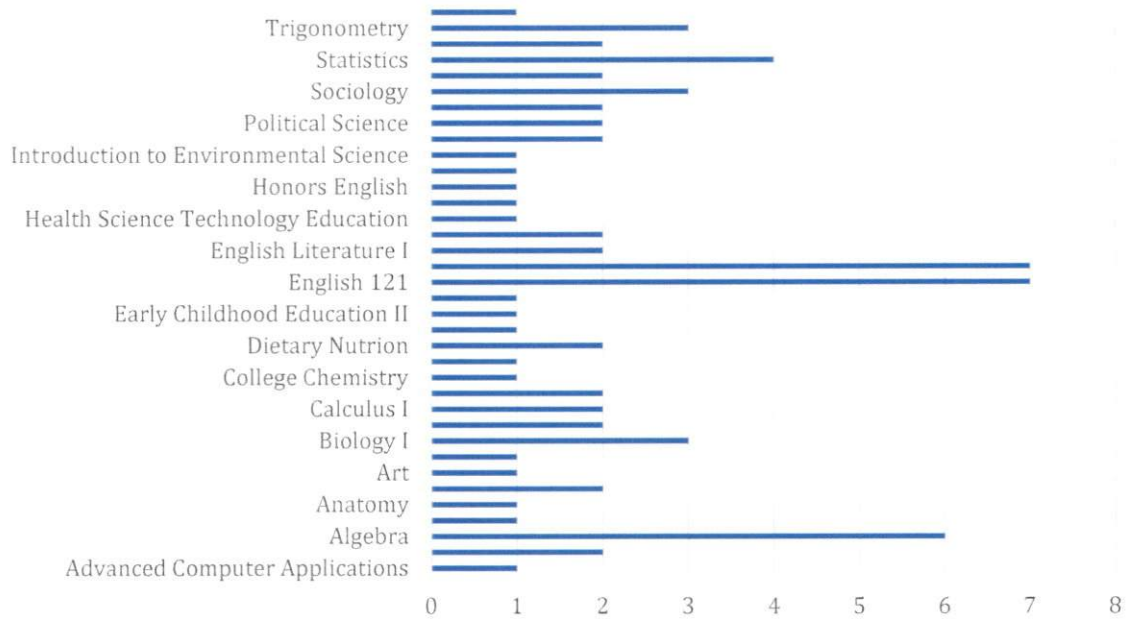
The Northeastern Colorado Student to Career Opportunity Initiative includes seven elements to be completed within a two-year timeframe. Below is a summary of the activities completed or in progress for the first year of the Initiative:

### Year One Goals and Outcomes to Date:

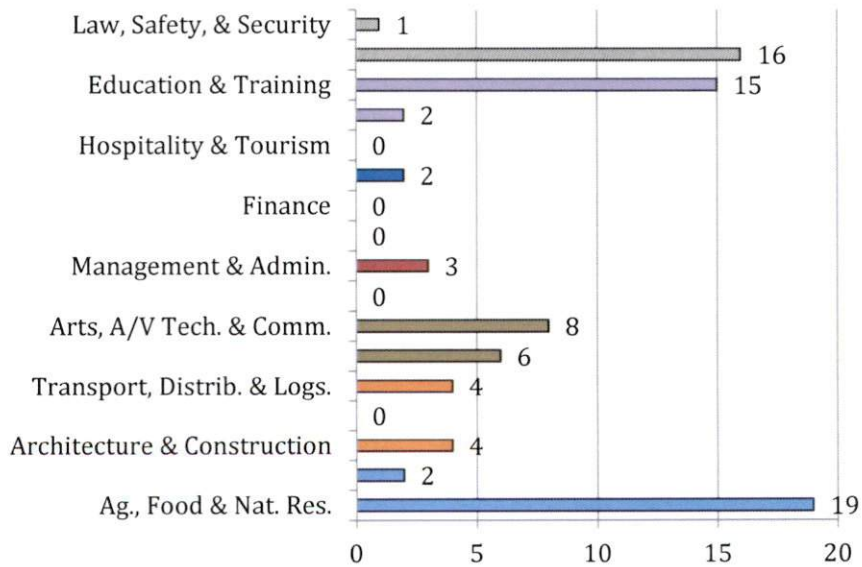
1. **Engagement of 757 junior high, high school and college age students considering career and entrepreneurial business opportunities in northeastern Colorado.**
  - a. Regional 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Career Fair hosted by Don Crow with NECO Support 320
  - b. Revere School District 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Civic Entrepreneurship Challenge event 23
  - c. Regional Health Fair sponsored by PCED and the Anschutz REACH program 140
  - d. Virtual reality careers demos (Julesburg, Merino, Otis, Revere, Sterling & Yuma) 130
  - e. Merino, High School of Business Student Presentations on Career Opportunities 50
  - f. Regional Robotics Challenge with middle school age students at NJC in Sterling 68
  - g. Alternative school Tech Day at NJC with Eastern CO Workforce and CSU 14
  - h. Millennial Group young adult engagement and alumni workforce recruitment 12

**757**
2. **Assessment of workforce demands and specific skill needs of area employers seeking to grow and hire talent in the next 2 to 5 years utilizing interviews and research by Eastern CO Workforce Development.**
  - a. Employer Interviews completed in Logan, Morgan, Phillips and Sedgwick Co. with NECO support. Currently working with county partners to hold employer roundtables in Yuma and Washington Counties.
  - b. Participating in Ag Sector Partnership and CORE with Eastern CO Workforce Center.
  - c. Collaborating with CareerWise and participating on Switzerland rural team.
  - d. Meeting with employers in the region about tailored apprenticeship skill needs. Beginning to have businesses reach out to us regarding their workforce pipeline needs. Businesses are anxious to grow and need qualified employees to make that growth happen. They appreciate and welcome apprenticeships for both employers and employee candidates to build relationships and ensure a good fit.
3. **Inventory of the certification and degree requirements for the job opportunities identified through the business assessment; inventory current certification and degree programs available and identify where gaps exist to be addressed by the initiative partners for program implementation in year two.**
  - a. Concurrent Course data was collected with the support of NE BOCES for our region as illustrated by the following chart.

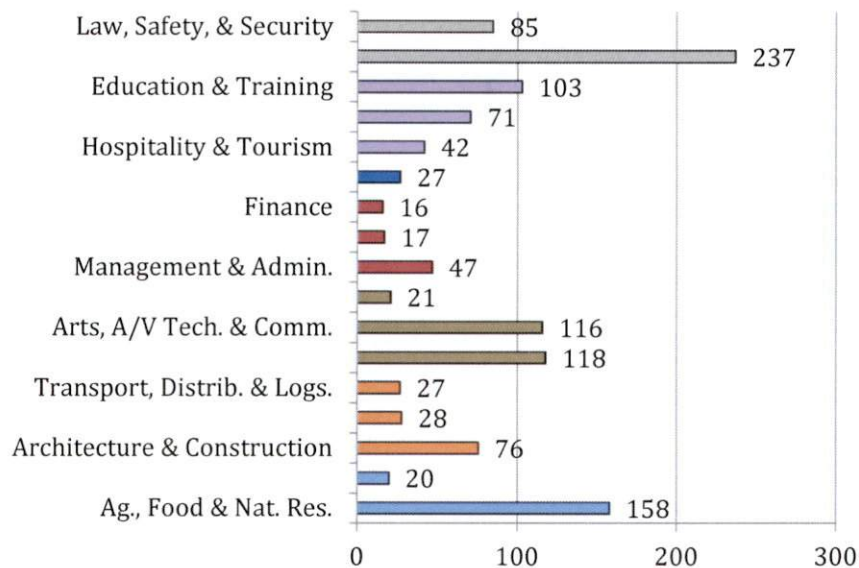
## Concurrent Courses by Number of Programs in Region



- b. Working with NJC, MCC and CSU on the inventory of post-secondary certification and degree programs that match with employer workforce needs being identified in Item 2 above. We are also identifying private sector certification and career pathway programs such as John Deere University.
- c. Eighty-two (82) college scholarships have been identified by NE BOCES in connection with the following career pathways in our region:



- d. Career pathway information was collected from 1,209 students from 15 school districts with the support of NE BOCES:



**4. Engagement of the post-secondary education, technical training and non-profit resource partners who will provide programming to address the workforce and skills requirements of employers, including necessary certification and degree requirements.**

- a. Working with NJC and CSU at the Sterling campus on hydroponics project, we hope to provide a FarmBot to their Ag program with a grant from Pinnacol Assurance. We have received funding to place additional robotics in area schools over the next 2 years.
- b. Met with CO4F, Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund to discuss partnering on a project in Sedgwick County. Additional partners, as of now include, CSU Extension, Veterans Affairs, area schools, CDOT and Amalgamated Sugar. We want to build a healthy community pilot model for Colorado, a vision shared by CO4F and our partners.
- c. Continuing work with Workforce Development and attending CORE team meeting for Eastern Colorado Workforce Development at MCC. A highlight will be touring the nursing practicum demonstration area. They have 2 interactive ER's with the ability to control the experience for the student in each room separately.
- d. Working with area High School of Business teachers on certification requirements and identifying additional schools interesting in participating. The schools that currently have the HSofB programs are great partners in identifying student apprenticeships candidates.
- e. We continue to receive requests and make visits to schools with technology days, career fair participation and career exploration with students and local employers.
- f. Employers have asked for a course that teaches the essentials of work place etiquette, responsibility and accountability, and customer service. We are therefore developing an Essential Skills program for participants in the STCO apprenticeship program. As we prepare for year two, we will also be developing our assessment syllabus, providing clear

expectations for the employees and employers on the front end, and so we can accurately measure the outcomes when the apprenticeship experiences are concluded.

- g. We received 31 applications for 3 summer 2017 apprenticeships that we are implementing to test and evaluate in preparation for the second year of the initiative when we will fulfill the remaining 21 paid apprenticeships funded under the El Pomar, NE Regional Council grant and CDHE New Partner's Program. Of the 31 applications received to date, 80% seek to stay in NE Colorado to pursue their careers.

In addition to sustaining the work described above, the following three activities will be implemented in the second year of the Student to Career Opportunity Initiative.

**Year Two:**

5. Enrollment of students in career training, certification and degree programs, with apprentice-mentoring opportunities by employers seeking to hire initiative graduates, thereby helping students to apply their learning in real world settings and to be prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation.
6. Evaluate the initial results of the initiative through data collection and interviews with employers, students and educators, and make needed adjustments. Engage local foundations, business partners, local government and regional program partners to sustain the initiative beyond the second year of New Partner Program grant funding.
7. Celebrate the early successes of students and employers in the initiative to reinforce the value of their contributions and to encourage additional students and employers to become involved. Also, share the learning gained from the initiative with other regions of Colorado seeking to implement similar programs.

**Contact Information:**

For more Information about this report and the Northeast Colorado STCO Initiative, please contact Mike Sullivan at [sced@pctelcom.coop](mailto:sced@pctelcom.coop) or Craig Schroeder at [craigschroeder@mac.com](mailto:craigschroeder@mac.com)

***“Don’t teach me the best way that you can teach.***

***Teach me the best way I can learn.”***

**- Wisdom of a Child**