

GRANT COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN



NOVEMBER 2020

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	8
Background	10
Alignment with Regional and State Plans.....	12
Monthly Workforce Partner Meetings	12
Priority Industries	13
WIOA Workforce Services.....	13
Focusing Our Work.....	15
Remote Work Opportunities.....	15
Leadership Training	16
Challenges to a Comprehensive Approach to Workforce Development.....	20
Awareness Barriers	20
Education and Skill-Building Barriers	20
Geographic Barriers.....	22
Transportation.....	22
Childcare Constraints.....	23
National Trends	23
State Trends	24
Limitations of the Business Community	26
Limitations Of Prospective Job Applicants.....	26
Lack of a Unified Definition of Success and Metric Based on Outcomes, Not Outputs.....	26
Industry Analysis.....	28
Growth Industries	29
Keys to Success.....	32

Short-Term Goals (By End of 2022).....	32
Mid-Term Goals (By End of 2025).....	32
Long-Term Goals (By End of 2030).....	32
A connected, Comprehensive Approach to Talent Development that Drives Economic Development	35
Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering	36
Cybersecurity/IT.....	37
Finance.....	38
Healthcare.....	39
Manufacturing.....	40
Natural Resources	41
Ranching/Agriculture/Forestry.....	42
Tourism.....	43
Building the Region’s Talent Pipeline	45
Awareness	45
Policy.....	47
Business Engagement.....	49
Leadership.....	49
Mentorship	51
Internship	52
Apprenticeship	53
Externship.....	54
STEM-H/STEM/STEAM Proficiency	54
High School Graduation	56
Career Certifications and Two-Year College Completion.....	60
Four-Year College Completion	62

Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act (WIOA) / Workforce Connections Clients.....	63
Evaluation and Accountability	66
Business License Renewal.....	68
Preparing the Workforce of the Future	70
Trade Area Development and Remote Work Certification	71
Infrastructure Improvements	71
Conclusion	73
Appendix I.....	75
Appendix II.....	76

TABLE OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1—Grant County Structured Network	8
Figure 2—View of Silver City from La Capilla	9
Figure 3—Chino Open Pit Mine	10
Figure 4—Workforce Talent Development Structure.....	17
Figure 5—Silver City Clay Festival	18
Figure 6—Classroom education using technology.....	22
Figure 7—Corre Caminos Silver City Route	22
Figure 8—Share of Children Age 0-5 in regular nonparental care	23
Figure 9—Correlation between childcare utilization and women’s labor force participation rate.....	24
Figure 10—Children in a childcare facility	25
Figure 11—Big Ditch Park.....	26
Figure 12—View of Boston Hill	35
Figure 13—Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering Pathway.....	36
Figure 14—Cybersecurity/IT Pathway	37
Figure 15—Finance Pathway	38
Figure 16—Healthcare Pathway	39
Figure 17—Manufacturing Pathway	40

Figure 18—Natural Resources.....	41
Figure 19—Ranching/AG/Forestry Pathway.....	42
Figure 20—Tourism Pathway.....	43
Figure 21—Local Artisan Shop.....	47
Figure 22—Row Crop Thinner.....	50
Figure 23—Western New Mexico University.....	60
Figure 24—Silver City Clay Festival.....	61
Figure 25—Trail of Mountain Spirits.....	68
Figure 26—Gartner Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies.....	70
Figure 27—BLS Fastest Growing Occupations, 2020.....	70
Figure 28—Hikers on the Continental Divide Trail.....	73
Table 1—Annual Cost of Child Care by Prover type and child age.....	24
Table 2—Industry Size by number of employees.....	28
Table 3—Weighted Average Annual Wage by Industry.....	29
Table 4—College Scorecard Estimates.....	61

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACE—Academic Career Experience

BLS—Bureau of Labor Statistics

CPC—Community Partnerships for Children

CRA—Community Reinvestment Act

CTE—Career and Technical Education

CWA—Community Workforce Alliance

ECE—Early Childhood Education

EDIP—Economic Development Implementation Project

EDO—Economic Development Organization

STEM / STEM-H / STEAM—Science, Technology, Engineering, (Arts), Mathematics, (Health)

SWNMCOG—Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments

WIOA—Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act

WNMU—Western New Mexico University



INTRODUCTION

This Workforce Development Plan (the “Plan”) is intended to be used as the guiding document for workforce development efforts performed by the Community Workforce Alliance (herein referred to as the “CWA”). It is expected that this will be a “living” document, and that the CWA and local workforce board will collaborate to amend this document every two years to respond to national, regional, and local workforce trends.

The need for this document and a more tailored approach to workforce development comes from the Community Dialogue process, led by Silver Consolidated Schools in 2018/2019. The Community Dialogue process included members from both the public and private sectors, getting buy-in and commitment from stakeholders across the community with the goal to foster a change in the community that could lead it to more effectively respond to and prepare for the County’s economic and workforce needs.

Around the same time as the Community Dialogue process, Better City LLC, an economic development consulting firm based in Utah, was hired by the Town of Silver City to assist in an Economic Development Implementation Project (EDIP). The firm’s scope of work included reviewing existing plans to determine which projects were the most feasible and to provide capacity enhancement to bring those plans to bear.

In March 2020, the United States economy experienced a significant disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines issued at federal, state, and local levels. The pandemic caused a massive demand shock to the local economy, forcing several small businesses to close their doors and lay off or furlough their employees. Freeport curtailed its Chino mining

operations for several months, resulting in millions of dollars being lost from the local economy. The need for a coherent, targeted strategy to workforce development is apparent. The community needs to prepare itself for future events that may disrupt labor market activities and demand for products and services. To accomplish this, a unified and structured approach to economic development and workforce development is needed.

Better City, under guidance from the Town of Silver City, Silver Consolidated Schools, Grant County, and the Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments (SWNMCOG), organized a “structured-network approach” to economic development. A diagram of the network is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1—Grant County Structured Network

This document has been designed to guide and align the efforts of the CWA as well as the other task forces. To date, the following task forces have been organized and are leading economic and workforce development efforts in the community:

Southwest New Mexico Collaborative—Nurtures outdoor recreation and outdoor-oriented business ventures to promote eco-tourism, accessibility, and better utilization and stewardship of the region’s outdoor assets. This organization is in charge of sustainable community development in the region. The CWA runs independently of but is highly engaged with this leadership committee.

Community Workforce Alliance (CWA)—Made up of city and county leaders, industry leaders, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to guide the implementation of economic development and workforce development throughout the community.

Placemaking Task Force—Leads placemaking efforts in downtown Silver City to increase quality of life, drive private sector investment, and address housing and other downtown issues.

Entrepreneurial Task Force—Fosters a strong entrepreneurial network and assists entrepreneurs in creating and maintaining profitable local businesses. The task force promotes remote work, where possible, to increase access to skilled labor markets and improve economic resiliency.

Fort Bayard Task Force—Leverages the Fort Bayard historical site as a regional economic development project to drive tourism and spending in the mining district.

The CWA’s dual mandate of economic development and workforce development will ensure that the alliance has a

balanced, holistic approach to projects. It is expected that one of the first steps of the CWA will be to organize the CWA into an Economic Development Organization (EDO) and hire a full-time economic development director who can lead, organize, and implement economic and workforce development projects in accordance with the CWA’s vision and guidance. As such, the CWA will work closely with the SWNMCOG, the Workforce Development Board, and State offices of Economic and Workforce Development, to ensure that efforts are aligned and that the needs of the community are well represented.



SOURCE: Visitsilvercity.org

Figure 2—View of Silver City from La Capilla

We would like to thank all government, industry, educational, and other leaders who have participated in the creation of this document. These include, but are not limited to, the following entities:

- AgMechtronix
- Aldo Leopold Charter School

- Amplified Therapy
- Center for Health Innovation
- Community Foundation of Grant County
- Edward Jones
- First Savings Bank
- Freeport-McMoRan
- Grant County
- Hidalgo Medical Services
- Holiday Inn Express of Silver City
- National Center for Frontier Communities
- New Mexico Economic Development Department
- PNM
- Silver City Chamber of Commerce
- Silver Consolidated Schools
- SWNMCOG
- The Town of Silver City
- The Village of Santa Clara
- Western Bank
- Western New Mexico University
- WNM Communications

A special thanks is also due to the Bridge of Southern New Mexico and its *Joint Regional Workforce Talent Development Strategic Plan (2018)*, a document from which a significant portion of the language of this Plan has been adopted for Grant County.



SOURCE: Avelno Masestas

Figure 3—Chino Open Pit Mine

BACKGROUND

The CWA is organized around six industry sectors that have a significant impact on the County’s labor market:

- 1) Finance
- 2) Healthcare
- 3) Manufacturing
- 4) Natural Resources
- 5) Ranching/Agriculture/Forestry
- 6) Tourism

The CWA has also targeted several industries and occupations that will play a key role in economic diversification:

- 7) Aerospace and mechanical engineering
- 8) Computer/software engineering
- 9) Cybersecurity/IT

Together, these nine industries represent the “Industries of Focus” and will be referenced several times throughout this report. This list is specific to Grant County and differs somewhat from the State’s “Priority Sectors”¹ or the region’s “Priority Industries.”² Ideally, this document will provide guidance for existing industry clusters, new clusters which have a significant potential for growth, and other clusters that will need to be added to the community to keep it relevant for future business needs and to increase the County’s median wage.

What is clear for the State of New Mexico is that the CWA’s efforts are not just about building workforce talent. This effort is about transforming the future of the County by boosting the earning potential of its citizens. The CWA seeks to create the alignment needed to equip those who are here now with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in higher-paying careers and career ladders—not just jobs—and to drive the holistic development of the County. A skilled and ready workforce in these nine industries will ripple across the County in an economic cascade of increased incomes and buying power, along with improving every social determinant of health that has held back its citizens for far too long due to the pervasiveness of poverty.

According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce’s report [Good Jobs that Pay without a BA](#), there are 30 million jobs that offer median annual earnings of \$55,000 and do not require a bachelor’s degree. In New Mexico, 54% of all jobs are these jobs, and they are on the rise in both skilled services and

blue-collar jobs and primarily go to associate degreed workers. More detailed data is available in the Industry Analysis section of this report.

There is so much to be gained from holistically and strategically boosting the economy by targeting talent development strategies aligned to these nine industries. Just a sampling of return on investment in just one of the targets, healthcare, would include:

- NM Medical Academy and AMA Paper, “Physicians Boost the Economy”
 - Every physician generated or attracted in a community supports 9.4 other healthcare jobs,
 - \$1,313,276 in sales revenue per New Mexico physician,
 - \$764,087 in wages and benefits per New Mexico physician,
 - \$45,654 in local and state tax revenue per New Mexico physician.
- Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine Report
 - 70% of medical students remain in the communities where they complete a residency,
 - Each generates 9 new jobs,
 - Each generates \$200,00 in annual economic benefits to the community while in their program and \$1.9 million for every year they remain after training.

¹ The State’s priority sectors are Health, Aerospace And STEM, Intelligent Manufacturing, Sustainable and Value-Added Agriculture, Sustainable and Green Industries, Film and Digital Media, Tourism and Recreation, Information Technology and Cybersecurity, Education, and International Trade. The full document can be found at <https://www.dws.state.nm.us/en-us/Workforce-Boards>.

² The region’s priority industries are Aerospace, Agriculture, Education, Healthcare, Logistics and Warehousing, Manufacturing, Mining, and Hospitality and Tourism. The full document can be found at <https://www.employnm.com/>.

Strategically investing resources into the Industries of Focus will be the primary effort of the CWA moving forward.

ALIGNMENT WITH REGIONAL AND STATE PLANS

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires each local workforce development board (SAWDB) to develop and submit, in partnership with the local chief elected official, a comprehensive local four-year plan, hereinafter referred to as the regional plan.

The SAWDB's regional plan supports the alignment strategy described in the New Mexico WIOA Combined State Plan PY 2020-2023, in accordance with WIOA Section 102(b)(1)(E), and otherwise be consistent with the New Mexico Combined State Plan. By aligning the regional plan with the state plan, CWA's Plan will support the coordination and collaborate strategies in the SAWDB regional plan. The partnership with the CWA and the SAWDB will formally be established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that identifies the common objectives and each other's roles in the coordination and collaboration. The key objectives in the MOU will center around creating industry specific initiatives and other initiatives that support the objectives of the local, regional, and state plans. Other initiatives include, but are not limited to, addressing the challenges to a comprehensive approach to workforce development, as stated in this plan.

The SAWDB also works with local and state workforce partners to strategically identify the needs of industry and create training programs that meet the needs of industry. This is defined as a sector partnership strategy and a component of the SAWDB's Career Pathway Plan. It is the construct for how the SAWDB will work with CWA and other partners to build a skilled and ready workforce. The six elements of the Career Pathways are the following:

1. Building cross-agency partnerships and clarifying roles within the workforce system
2. Identifying industry sectors and engaging employers
3. Designing education and training programs to meeting the needs of employers
4. Identifying funding needs and sources
5. Aligning policies and programs
6. Measuring system change and performance

Monthly Workforce Partner Meetings

To support the coordination and collaboration, the Administrative Entity of the SAWDB's and its One Stop Operator periodically gather workforce partners to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services to individuals with barriers to employment through planning, partner and training provider collaboration, cross training, implementation, and reporting through the One-Stop Operator and administrative entity.

Monthly workforce partner meetings, facilitated by the One-Stop Operator, will periodically measure:

- leveraging of partner resources
- coordination of outreach and recruitment
- re-alignment of service delivery strategies
- review of performance measure indicators
- funding opportunities with the administrative entity

Specific examples include the planning and leveraging of staff for job fairs. In PY19, the partners conducted coordinated job fairs with the City of Las Cruces. The city's economic development department provided the Las Cruces Convention Center, the partners recruited the employers, informed the job seekers, and staffed the job fair. In addition, the board is committed to

partnering with other entities in applications for additional funding, such as, the Rural Healthcare Initiative to develop healthcare apprenticeship programs to meet the needs of the healthcare industry through a discretionary U.S. Department of Labor funding opportunity.

This will be accomplished by maintaining a healthy system for referring individuals to workforce partners that specialize in helping those with barriers overcome or navigate their challenges. As individuals are serviced through the workforce pipeline, cohesiveness and collaboration among the partners play a critical role in their success. WIOA establishes regulations and guidance that provide local workforce boards the authority to create partnerships among the required workforce partners in the system.

Priority Industries

CWA identifies seven of the SAWDB's priority industries. The SAWDB identifies the following priority industries:

1. *Aerospace
2. *Agriculture
3. Education
4. *Health care
5. Logistic and warehousing
6. *Manufacturing
7. *Mining (CWA identifies Natural Resources)
8. Hospitality and *Tourism, and
9. *Information Technology

*CWA priority industries

The coordinated sector partnership strategy efforts and partner initiatives between CWA and SAWDB within the respective

industries will support the short, mid, and long-term goals to benefit the priority industries in this plan.

WIOA Workforce Services

WIOA reauthorizes and establishes the public workforce system by title. The functions within the system are funded by different departments at the federal level and issued to states. Title I is the only funding passed onto local workforce development boards in New Mexico. Partners who receive funds through the four titles govern and manage through respective funding independently of each other but work together to align and leverage their resources at the local level.

- Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs administered by Department of Labor (DOL);
- Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program administered by Education Department (ED);
- Title III Employment Service program under the Wagner-Peyser Act administered by DOL; and
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 administered by ED

The collaborate approach and SAWDB's career pathways plan lends itself to providing an array of service that can be promoted to the community through various CWA partners. It includes the opportunity to braid funding by strategically aligning resources and services. Ultimately, the partnership between CWA and SAWDB will support the economic development goals of the community by strategically aligning CWA's, SAWDB's, and the State's priorities.



FOCUSING OUR WORK

Unleashing the economic potential of our region lies in equipping those who work here with the education, knowledge, and skills they need to be successful in high-skilled, high-paying jobs in industries that are vital to the County's economy. However, the "lack of a skilled and ready workforce" is consistently identified as the number-one barrier to economic development and diversification of the economy in Grant County and the Southwest New Mexico region; however, this has neither been clearly defined nor measured.

The key to moving us out of this conundrum is connecting assets that lead to action:

- **Education** is the key to building talent
- **Talent** is the key to economic development
- **Economic development** is the key to job growth
- **Job growth** fuels regional prosperity and a vibrant, thriving community for all

The CWA is a business- and education-led collaboration, with the resources, programs, knowledge, and people necessary to begin a conversation about workforce development. The CWA built upon the successful community collaboration approach started with Silver Consolidated School's Community Dialogue process to pursue its goal of building a strong, competitive 21st Century workforce.

The CWA looked across several economic development plans for the County to identify consistencies in targeted industries. The Workforce Development task force set its sights on the nine industries with the greatest potential to succeed, based on the assets already in place and the employment opportunities each one provides:

- 1) Aerospace and mechanical engineering
- 2) Computer/software engineering
- 3) Cybersecurity/IT
- 4) Finance
- 5) Healthcare
- 6) Manufacturing
- 7) Natural Resources
- 8) Ranching/Agriculture/Forestry
- 9) Tourism

REMOTE WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Remote and virtual jobs are becoming increasingly common and sought-after in the global economy. The evolution and widespread availability of technology has allowed businesses to offer many services via the internet through use of freelance and collaboration software. Two factors are driving an increased reliance on remote workers:

- 1) **Movement from rural locations to urban and suburban locations**—This demographic trend has led to a shortage of affordable workforce housing in urban centers. Non-C-suite jobs in expensive cities cause employees to choose between living in an expensive downtown apartment or to live in surrounding suburban neighborhoods. This causes many employers to search for higher-paying alternatives in other industries. Remote work, which was proven viable by the COVID-19 pandemic, can leverage employees who live in areas with a lower cost of living and better quality of life. Silver City stands as a good workforce alternative to the Las Cruces and Tucson workforce centers.
- 2) **Market restructuring from the COVID-19 pandemic**—In early 2020, a global pandemic caused a significant spike

in remote work opportunities. Businesses that were hesitant to allow remote workers now are more likely to allow workers who have the technical skills and/or experience to work remotely. If not fully remote, many jobs now allow for a hybrid model wherein the worker comes in weekly, bi-monthly, quarterly, etc.

For Grant County, these trends lend themselves to career opportunities that are otherwise not present in the local market. Remote work can increase local earnings, address skills mismatches, and provide economic diversification and resiliency. As remote jobs become viable, workforce housing and broadband will become increasingly important issues that must be addressed by local governments and businesses.



LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Having the right leadership is going to be critical for the successful implementation of this workforce development plan. As the

community moves toward implementing the recommendations provided in this report, leaders will need to be willing to address difficult challenges and have hard discussions. The CWA will need to make sure that participating members are committed to the goals and vision of the community and there is not any “window dressing.” It will also be important to understand what role each entity should play and cutting excess so that efforts are not being duplicated and resources are used effectively. This will only happen with deep collaboration and coordination between stakeholders and CWA leadership.

There must be an understanding that developing a comprehensive approach to workforce development entails mobilizing all members of the community toward the goal of workforce talent development.

As we move forward in laying out the strategies and tactics for building high-skilled workforce talent in a way that drives economic development, we must begin with a foundational understanding that developing a comprehensive workforce entails mobilizing all members of the community toward the goal of workforce talent development. This, in turn, will have a far broader impact in changing the dominant, primarily negative narrative of this region and foster a cultural shift toward educational attainment, economic stability, and high expectations.

Figure 4 outlines this comprehensive approach to workforce talent development and the flow of strategies and tactics that begin with policy at the base and work their way up the graphic vertically. By no means are these policies intended to be pursued sequentially. In fact, success is predicated on simultaneous implementation of major elements of the plan. A more detailed discussion of how these elements work together can be found starting on page 35.

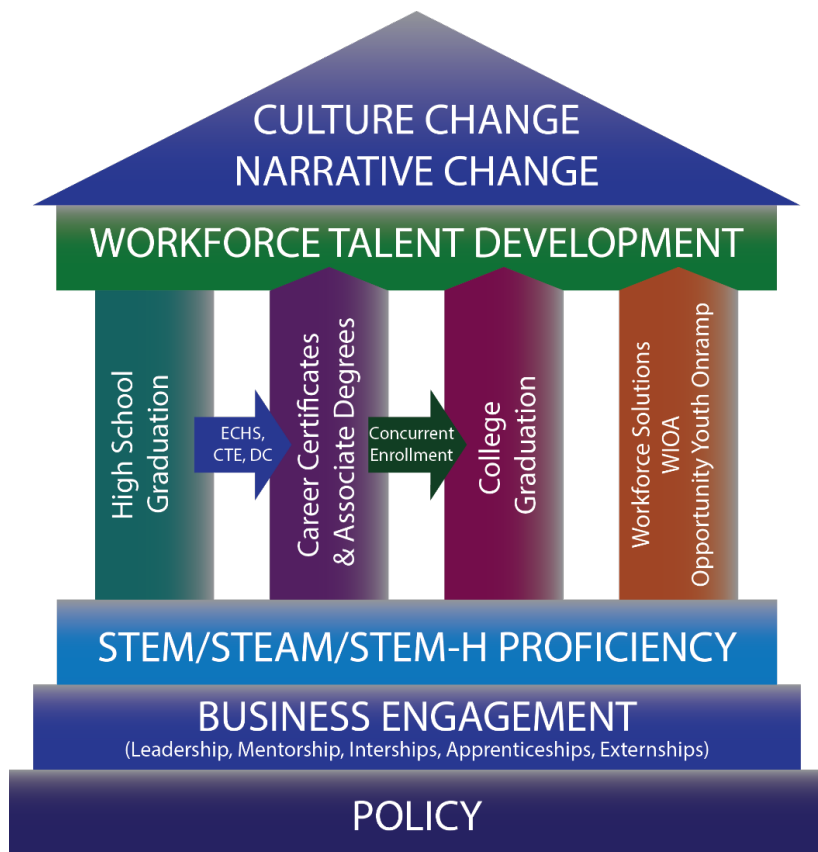


Figure 4—Workforce Talent Development Structure

A comprehensive approach to workforce development requires good **policy** to support sustainability for the long term. The **business** community must take a leadership role throughout the continuum to close the soft skills gaps by engaging in the five “ships” of engagement: leadership, mentorship, internship, apprenticeship, and externship. Our workforce must be **STEAM/STEM-H and remote work** proficient to be successful in a 21st Century workforce.

We must also mobilize the four levers of change for young workers to successfully enter the workforce: **High School Graduation** is a must, but then they must cross at least one more finish line in post-secondary, including **trade school credentials, career certifications, associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, or above**. For those who have not successfully completed their education, we must mobilize our **state and federal workforce dollars** to help Opportunity Youth and low-skilled, low-paid workers get the certification and/or college credentials needed to secure higher-skilled, higher wage jobs in their respective pathways.

Once all these assets are moving in a united direction, we will have a comprehensive approach to **workforce talent development** that changes the narrative about what it means to grow up in Grant County and the Southwest Region. It will also **change culture**, as our community becomes a culture of educational attainment, high expectations, and life-long learning, and it will change the **narrative** about what it means to grow up in Grant County.

The following strategies will guide successful implementation of this model:

- Champion a positive, asset-based narrative that inspires and mobilizes all audiences in the continuum
- Leverage new and existing platforms to build awareness of all aspects of the workforce talent continuum
- Implement solutions that improve or promote stronger coordination of existing assets
- Ensure the leadership, voice, and participation of industry in all efforts
- Promote a culture of excellence and entrepreneurship

- Prioritize educational approaches that increase STEM-H/STEAM and remote work proficiency
- Implement or expand data-driven best practices that can be measured in both outputs and outcomes
- Respect and promote the value of the multicultural identity of our region
- Pursue two-generation solutions whenever possible to help youth and parents simultaneously
- Develop leadership training to upskill managers and business leaders
- Implement remote work approaches to secure high-wage, high-growth career occupations that might not be otherwise present in the local market
- Address remote work infrastructure by pushing for improvements to workforce housing and broadband
- Conduct constant evaluation and communication to provide course corrections, when necessary, and prioritize support for actions that are working well

We will achieve success in this work when the talent of Grant County demonstrates a set of foundational characteristics:

- Deal with ambiguity, problem-solving
- Critical thinkers
- Proficient oral and written communicators in multiple languages, including application to professional fields
- Strong work ethic
- Accountable
- Value-driven
- Persistent and resilient

And when our talent is successful, our community will experience a transformation. This region will be defined by the following characteristics:

- A transformed regional economy fueled by a high-skilled workforce that supports the needs of a diverse set of industries
- Business’ choice destination for high-quality, easily mobilized talent
- Appreciative and supportive of the value of a high-quality workforce
- Opportunities for advanced education, employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development
- High-quality PK-12 educational systems
- Decreased need for public assistance
- Elimination of “brain drain” due to the new and growing opportunities for a high quality of life in our region



SOURCE: Visitsilvercity.org

Figure 5—Silver City Clay Festival



CHALLENGES TO A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Grant County and the Southwest New Mexico region are not unique in the challenges they face to building a skilled and ready workforce. The shortage of technical- and middle-skilled workers for available jobs, underemployment of university graduates with degrees mismatched to labor market needs, and a lack of employability skills in young workers captures headlines across the country.

However, thanks to the partnerships represented in the CWA, Grant County has the resources and programs in place to address and overcome these barriers. The challenge will be to prioritize and target these interventions to begin closing long-standing gaps in growing workforce proficiency and unleashing the economic potential of the residents in the County.

A more detailed summary of barriers follows, but the most pressing to resolve include the following:

- Building broad awareness of educational and workforce training opportunities
- Absence of business voice in shaping workforce education and training programs and curriculum
- Failure to better leverage federal and state workforce training investments
- Misalignment between educational partners
- Poor or no career counseling for youth
- Absence of a common vision for success
- Lack of dedicated remote work resources to assist in developing a workforce of the future, such as regular “meet-ups” and social services

AWARENESS BARRIERS

Huge awareness barriers exist across the County, preventing working age adults from taking advantage of the educational programs available to them, as well as hindering youth from understanding the career opportunities within their reach. Youth are almost wholly unaware of the high-paying jobs and careers that can be obtained with career certifications and associate degrees, and so are their parents. Educational entities need greater engagement with target industries to better understand the needs of business, address curricular changes, and identify work-based learning opportunities to immediately begin to remedy the gap between educational and workforce preparedness. Businesses in target industries can solve their own problems with the lack of employability skills in potential workers but need a more systematic approach to creating meaningful work-based learning opportunities to close those gaps. The business community is also largely unaware of the benefits of skill-based hiring to bring in qualified talent through non-traditional pathways to employment, as well as the benefits offered by hiring Opportunity Youth and those receiving training and placement support from federal workforce dollars.

EDUCATION AND SKILL-BUILDING BARRIERS

Traditionally, households have been the customer for, and children the consumer of, academic programs. Today, households have been joined by companies as customers, as young people represent their current and prospective employees.

K-12 and higher education institutions have come a long way in leveraging their collective assets and fixing broken pipelines between entities, but there are still complexities and disconnects between institutions that hinder, or completely prevent, a smooth

and easy path to credentials and degrees for future and current potential workers. These include:

- Low proficiency rates in reading, math, science, and English language arts across the K-12 system
- The need to have dual language proficiency in both basic and professional English and Spanish to better promote the value of our bi-lingual community and current and prospective employers
- Failure to connect the host of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math assets across the County to build a STEAM ecosystem that increases STEAM proficiency for all residents
 - Limited access to coding and other computer language skill development programs that can be pursued to spark transformation across industries
- Underutilization of Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways for high school students
- Gaps in workforce development training and workforce opportunities
- Misalignment, under-performance, and declining funding of public higher education assets:
 - Seamless paths from high school to two-year and four-year degrees, through Early College High Schools, Career and Technical Education Pathways, concurrent enrollment, and the beginning of breaking through these barriers and showing us the path forward
 - Failure to systematically award associate degrees for university students who have completed required coursework but do not persist to a four-year degree

- Low completion rates across the academic spectrum, but especially in higher education, that limit workforce potential of young people
- Challenges to funding in public and higher education, specifically failure to adequately fund dual credit courses for high school students at the higher education level
- Insufficient career and academic counseling throughout the continuum and limited exposure to career exploration for youth
- Unrealized opportunities to partner with federal, state, non-profit, and for-profit resources to devise targeted programs to skill-up workers for target industries
- Insufficient parent-engagement efforts to place parents and educators on the same team for student success, as well as two-generation interventions to help skill-up parents while young children experience high-quality early learning



SOURCE: Steveriot1

Figure 6—Classroom education using technology.

GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS

Grant County is comprised of the rural incorporated communities of Bayard, Hurley, and Santa Clara (collectively, the mining district) and the Town of Silver City, as well as various unincorporated communities and census-designated places. A large majority of the County's businesses are within Silver City town limits. To successfully engage rural residents, the plan must identify the best way to connect resources for those communities, due to the host of interconnected issues that occur in the rural parts of the community, including the lack of:

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Knowledge and skill-building resources

TRANSPORTATION

The County has limited public transportation that is serviced by [Corre Caminos](#). The fares are affordable, with one-way fares at \$0.75 for adults and monthly passes costing \$12.00. The firm also runs buses to Deming, Hurley, and Columbus.



Figure 7—Corre Caminos Silver City Route

While the cost of transportation may not be a major constraint to the local workforce, the availability and rapidity of the routes make it difficult for workers because there is an entire hour between buses. The CWA will need to listen to its workforce partners and its transit partners to ensure that the routes are advertised properly and that the routes are able to adequately balance between availability and the cost of operation.

CHILDCARE CONSTRAINTS

A strong economy necessitates a robust childcare network. The availability of affordable paid childcare plays a key role in allowing parents with children remain in the labor force. This is especially important when there is a lack of nearby family members or friends who can help.

National Trends

According to a 2019 report by the Committee for Economic Development, approximately 11.8 million children participate in regular, weekly care arrangements with a non-parental provider (about 58.7 percent). Figure 8 shows the share of children ages 0-5 in nonparental care for more than 10 hours per week. New Mexico ranks as number

44 on nationally, at 46.4 percent of children.

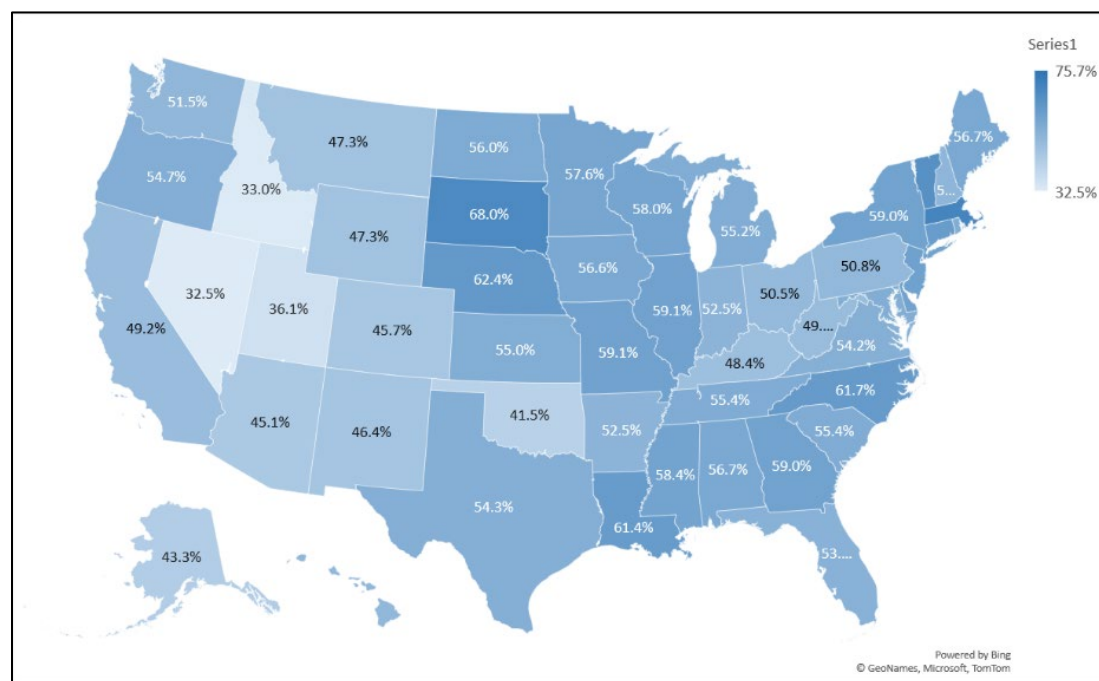
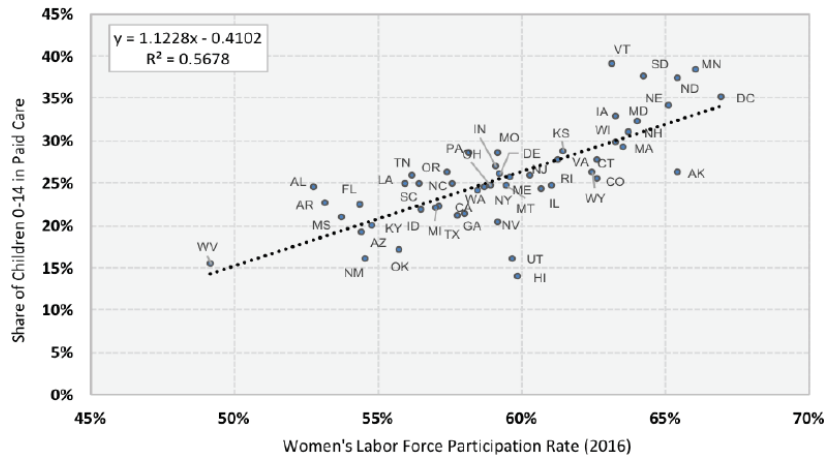


Figure 8—Share of Children Age 0-5 in regular nonparental care.

There is a strong relationship between the women’s labor force participation rate and childcare participation, with a one percent increase in the former accompanied by a 1.228 percent increase in the later. New Mexico ranks as one of the bottom 10 in share of children in childcare and also has a women’s labor force participation rate of approximately 54 percent, also in the bottom 10 (see Figure 9). It follows that increasing the availability and affordability of childcare in a given state will allow for increased participation in the labor force for women.



SOURCE: CED, RegionTrack

Figure 9—Correlation between childcare utilization and women’s labor force participation rate

The cost of organized childcare remains a constraint for families, especially for low-income and low-skilled workers. It is especially difficult for single mothers with very young children. In 2017, single mothers with younger children under three were unemployed at a rate more than three times the rate of married mothers with children the same age (at 9.9 percent versus 2.6

percent). While representing less than five percent of all families with children, single fathers must overcome similar hurdles.

The cost of care depends largely on the type of facility and the age of the child. Table 1 shows the average costs per year in New Mexico as well as surrounding states. According to this data, New Mexico’s costs are between 7 and 18 percent lower than the average of surrounding states and between 11 and 22 percent less than the national average. However, at between \$6,348 and \$8,412, this cost represents a huge burden on families and can take up between 10-20 percent of a typical NM household’s income for each child. Colfax County’s median household income is more than \$14,000 per year less than the typical NM household, so the burden locally could be even higher.

State Trends

The State of New Mexico has struggled for many years with childcare. According to the *Kids County Data Book* by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, family childcare homes in the state have declined by 45 percent since 2010, meaning that working parents have much fewer childcare options. Licensed and high-quality providers is particularly troubling, with New Mexico’s

	Infant	4-year-old child	School-age (before- and after-school care)	Infant	4-year-old child	School-age (before- and after-school care)
UNITED STATES	\$10,759	\$8,672	\$4,239	\$7,887	\$7,148	\$3,947
Arizona	\$10,687	\$8,344	\$5,162	\$7,141	\$6,789	\$4,884
Colorado	\$14,960	\$12,095	NR	\$10,522	\$9,953	NR
New Mexico	\$8,412	\$7,428	NR	\$6,684	\$6,348	NR
Oklahoma	\$8,372	\$6,448	\$4,160	\$6,916	\$6,084	\$4,212
Texas	\$9,102	\$6,894	\$3,342	\$6,994	\$5,404	\$2,750
Utah	\$9,708	\$7,464	NR	\$7,344	\$6,480	NR

Child Care Aware of America, 2018 Survey

Table 1—Annual Cost of Child Care by Prover type and child age

grandparents responsible for more than 37 percent of grandchildren under the age of six.³

The Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) has been working to increase overall participation in high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs in rural communities. According to their August 2019 report:

- Only a small percentage of licensed childcare providers in rural and frontier areas of the state participate in high-quality and supporting partnerships through collective learning
- Registered childcare homes are not required to meet minimal state licensing standards and must attend only six hours of annual training
- Family lack access to and information about ECE programs
- Employers experience a scarcity of reliable workers due to a lack of childcare options

These issues will need to be brought up often in CWA meetings and discussions so that these issues can be tracked and corrected as soon as possible. The CWA is uniquely positioned to work with local employers to assist their employees with finding childcare options. The CWA can also work with childcare providers to find new and innovative ways of using the community's limited resources to provide high-quality ECE to the County's children. The CWA should work with CPC to recruit additional childcare providers and ensure a consistency of quality and diversity of provider choice. The CPC already has a systematic approach through learning communities called LINKS which should be supported by leaders of the CWA.

³ New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department



SOURCE: CBC

Figure 10—Children in a childcare facility

The State created a [new department](#) in 2019, called the Early childhood Education & Care Department (NMECED) with the goal to “create a more cohesive, equitable, and effective early childhood system in New Mexico...coordinating a continuum of programs from prenatal to five—and ensuring that families in every corner of the state can access the services they need. The department will track regulation changes, provide employees with resources and benefits for childcare, and will be a new channel through which providers and parents can make their needs known to the state. The department is still very new and has limited capacity to act due to the coronavirus pandemic, so it remains to be seen how effective it can be. However, the CWA should try to connect into the departments resources to enhance and bolster initiatives that are underway locally.

LIMITATIONS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The largest portion of employers in the region are small businesses that do not have full-service human resource departments to carry out functions that would help close gaps for their employees, such as tuition-assistance for education to increase their skills, encouraging parental engagement in children’s education, and integration of mentorship, internship, apprenticeship, and externship offerings into regular operations. Additionally, there are limited employment opportunities for higher-skilled, more highly educated employees, perpetuating underemployment and the mismatch between four-year graduates and job openings.

LIMITATIONS OF PROSPECTIVE JOB APPLICANTS

Grant County had an estimated average unemployment rate of 4.9 percent in 2018, with the most recent estimate of 14.8 percent in July 2020. This is higher than the State’s estimated average unemployment rate of 12.7 percent and is significantly higher than the estimated national unemployment rate of 10.2 percent.⁴ In addition to the geographic barriers to rural populations discussed above, potential workers in the County face barriers to employment including a misalignment of skills available for jobs, immigration status, lack of English and/or Spanish proficiency, lack of technical skills and knowledge, and poor literacy and numeracy, as well as the interconnected challenges to employment faced by those with low incomes.

LACK OF A UNIFIED DEFINITION OF SUCCESS AND METRIC BASED ON OUTCOMES, NOT OUTPUTS

The County has long been aware of the challenges related to the workforce, but what has not existed is a set of metrics, along with the right partners, to gather and analyze data to guide workforce development efforts. Available data may address outputs, such as numbers of individuals served, but real change will take place when outcomes are measured and tracked.



Figure 11—Big Ditch Park

⁴ Source: New Mexico Labor Market Review, July 2020



INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

An analysis for the County was performed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local labor market. As shown in Table 2, Healthcare and Social Assistance is the largest industry in the County, with an estimated 126 establishments and 1,835 employees. The next-largest industry is educational services, with only 10 establishments but 1,474 employees. Retail and tourism-based industries take spots three and four, representing approximately 2,000 employees. It is likely that mining, with an estimated 1,200 employees in the County, make up a sizable portion near the top of the list, despite the data being repressed to preserve anonymity. However, as of Q3 2020 the Chino mine has been closed due to the coronavirus, with approximately two-thirds of the company's local workforce on furlough. It is unclear if the workforce will be returned to this level or will remain lower for the foreseeable future.

Industry	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees	% of establishments	% of employees
Total	758	9,275	100%	100%
Health Care and Social Assistance	126	1,835	17%	20%
Educational Services	10	1,474	1%	16%
Retail Trade	94	1,028	12%	11%
Accommodation and Food Services	71	959	9%	10%
Public Administration	45	540	6%	6%
Construction	77	402	10%	4%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	61	210	8%	2%
Administrative and Waste Services	31	173	4%	2%
Finance and Insurance	32	163	4%	2%
Professional and Technical Services	49	156	6%	2%
Manufacturing	20	116	3%	1%
Transportation and Warehousing	27	109	4%	1%
Information	16	100	2%	1%
Utilities	13	91	2%	1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	32	81	4%	1%
Wholesale Trade	16	79	2%	1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8	49	1%	1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	16	47	2%	1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	7	ND*	1%	ND*
Mining	7	ND*	1%	ND*
		*ND: 1,663		*ND: 18%

Table 2—Industry Size by number of employees

It is clear that the County's economy is heavily reliant on healthcare, mining, and education. However, the quantity of workers is not a good proxy for an industry's impact on the economy. Table 3 shows the average annual wage for each industry, weighted by employer type.⁵ It is clear from the table that employees in the mining industry make up a significant portion of the County's total wages, with average wages more than \$14,000 per employee higher than those in the utilities sector. The loss of jobs in this industry should be a top priority for the community in the short term, with a loss of more than 800 employees representing more than \$63 Million in wages lost on an annualized basis. In the short term, the impacts will be mitigated by unemployment benefits, but if the mine does not reopen these employees will move away to look for other jobs, leaving a large hole in the County's economy.

⁵

The BLS considers workers classified as Federal Government, State Government,

Local Government, or Private, each with a different average wage. If a type (i.e. private) made up 80 percent of workers, then the average was weighted to reflect that share

Industry	Weighted Average Annual Wage
Accommodation and Food Services	ND
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	ND
Mining	\$ 79,574.00
Utilities	\$ 65,526.00
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$ 61,583.00
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$ 60,553.00
Information	\$ 56,906.00
Public Administration	\$ 50,895.00
Wholesale Trade	\$ 48,557.00
Total	\$ 41,496.00
Construction	\$ 37,384.00
Finance and Insurance	\$ 36,736.00
Professional and Technical Services	\$ 35,461.00
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$ 34,980.00
Transportation and Warehousing	\$ 33,252.00
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$ 31,093.00
Administrative and Waste Services	\$ 26,714.00
Educational Services	\$ 26,031.00
Retail Trade	\$ 24,863.00
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	\$ 23,507.00
Manufacturing	\$ 22,572.00

SOURCE: BLS, Better City

Table 3—Weighted Average Annual Wage by Industry

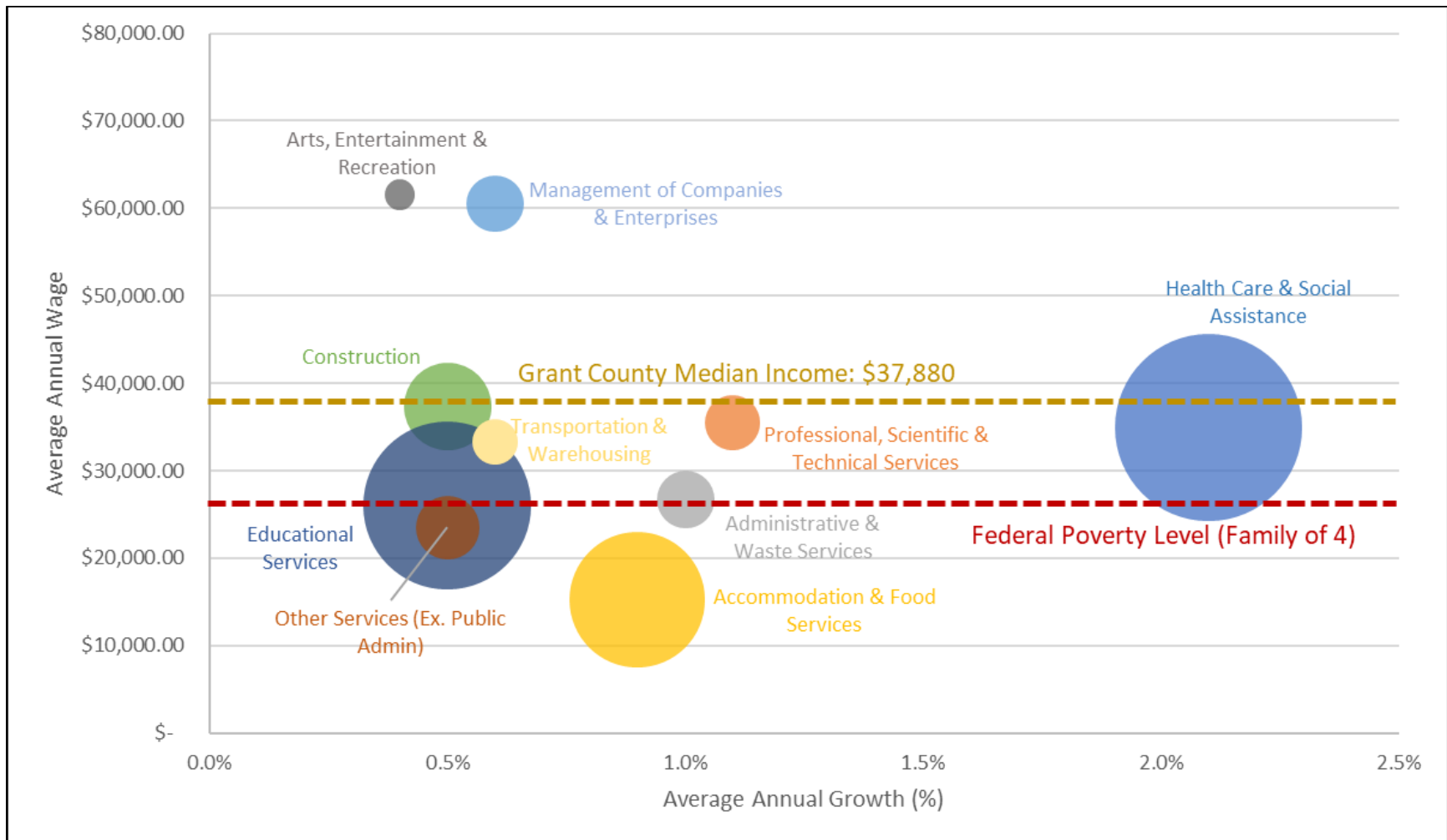
The CWA should make its first and top priority finding jobs and/or retraining options for furloughed/laid off workers in the mining industry, especially in identifying jobs that have similar skills to what they developed in the mining industry. It will be important to keep as many of them as possible to preserve the local economy.

GROWTH INDUSTRIES

To help the community move toward a more diverse and prosperous future, industries were analyzed by predicted growth and average wage, allowing the County to understand where opportunities are in the current labor market. This graph should be a main focus of the CWA's workforce development strategy because it shows which high-growth industries can raise the County's median household incomes and help lift its residents out of poverty. Focusing growth on industries which have wages below the poverty line will lead to an exacerbation of low incomes, while focusing efforts on higher-paid industries can alleviate the challenges of poverty and lift the county out of this issue. Such industries include:

- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Transportation & Warehousing

The County's Industries of Focus were made understanding this data, as well as by focusing of the Workforce of the Future, which can be found starting on page 69. This chart should be updated regularly to understand which industries are gaining traction regionally and then adapting the County's plan to take advantage of complementary industries and occupations.





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KEYS TO SUCCESS

The CWA has established a set of goals to shape and measure its approach:

SHORT-TERM GOALS (BY END OF 2022)

- Publish the pathways and making them accessible in all school district buildings and government buildings
- Have at least 15 local businesses on the CWA
- Have at least 50 sponsors of the CWA
- The CWA is sustainable and will not be a burden on local resources at the sunset of the EDA Grant funds

MID-TERM GOALS (BY END OF 2025)

- Expand the workforce pathways to include higher-paying trades (gold collar jobs) and green energy pathways (wind and solar)
- Have at least 50 local businesses on the CWA
- Have at least 100 sponsors of the CWA
- Every local government is participating in CWA meetings.
- The CWA is self-sufficient and is not reliant on grants/loans to fund basic operations

LONG-TERM GOALS (BY END OF 2030)

- Have at least 100 local businesses on the CWA
- Have at least 150 dues-paying members of the CWA
- Expand the CWA's boundaries to include surrounding counties of Hidalgo, Catron, and Sierra

The CWA set some overarching considerations to provide guidance to enduring, effective solutions:

- Be agile, flexible, and able to respond rapidly to industry changes
- Think innovatively about workforce needs for the long term
- Do not limit it with borders or buildings—think of solutions without borders
- Leverage the growing trend of those who earn their incomes virtually (solo and remote workers)
- Meaningful integration of project-based learning
- CWA members should commit to student hires, if possible, and adopting classes
 - Class-based projects can transcend borders—getting students to think regionally

To be successful, the CWA also customized approaches to education and talent-building by considering the unique needs of the target audiences in the current and future talent pool. To maximize federal and state investments to support this work, target audiences include those identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), as well as audiences that need tailored approaches:

- In-school youth 18 years old and under in whom we can change culture by instilling a culture of learning (“life-long learners”) and a culture of completion
- Opportunity Youth, or those 16-24 years of age who are neither employed nor in school
- Those with 2-4 years of some higher education, technical, and/or academic experience
- Dislocated workers who are unemployed or underemployed

- Mining district residents who face a complex, interconnected set of barriers to employment

Finally, the CWA recognized that equipping a high-quality, 21st Century workforce to success across industries required baseline competencies that currently contribute to the misalignment between job openings and qualified workers:

- STEM/STEAM/STEM-H proficiency
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Employability or “soft” skills, including:
 - Using good customer service skills
 - High expectations
 - Setting and reaching goals
 - Communication
 - Conflict resolution
 - Interviewing skills
 - Resume development
 - Job search skills
 - Etiquette for meals/meetings
 - Professional appearance
 - Ethics
 - Problem solving
 - Decision making
 - Time management
 - Collaboration and teamwork
 - Initiative
 - Leadership
 - Project management
- Remote work skills and/or certification

This plan is aligned with a set of recommendations for building a better New Mexico for children and families, as advanced by the Annie E. Casey *KidsCount* Data Book:

- Enact narrow, targeted economic development initiatives that require accountability for tax breaks to corporations linked to the creation of quality jobs
- Expand access to high school equivalency, adult basic education, job training, and career pathways programs
- Develop a state youth employment strategy using a career pathways approach that includes business, nonprofits, government, school districts, and colleges to help identify and provide support for disconnected youth, link funding and accountability and meaningful outcomes and create initiatives. Such a model should focus on low- and moderate-skill workers to boost their employability and opportunities for knowledge acquisition through higher education
- Increase capacity for school counseling.
- Provide relevant learning opportunities through service learning and dual credit parity to better prepare students for careers or college
- Ensure support for community schools, which provide students with services shown to increase academic performance, including health centers, before- and after-school programming, service learning, and classes for parents



307

OPEN

ART

VISA

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A CONNECTED, COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO TALENT DEVELOPMENT THAT DRIVES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is important to note that this plan targets nine specific industries that are intended to become the economic and workforce drivers of the County, but by no means does this plan intend for them to be the only industries that grow and get planted therein. For example, the healthcare pathway is very focused on the patient-care workforce in its continuum, but there are many other jobs in healthcare vital to making that industry thrive, including administrative, healthcare equipment manufacturers and providers, customer service professionals, and many more. Further, driving the workforce talent continuum into these industries will have immense ripple effects on other industries throughout the community, such as retail, restaurant, banking, hotel and tourism, not to mention the growth of the tax base to better fund our public-sector assets.

Therefore, as we move forward in laying out the strategies and tactics for building highly-skilled workforce talent in a way that drives economic development. As can be seen by Figure 4, our approach is comprehensive and touches every part of the continuum.

Building the workforce talent pipeline needed for success requires a combination of new and existing tools and relationships, as well as targeting our collective community assets to support the holistic talent development for our targeted industries.

Aligned with the Workforce Talent Development Framework above, talent development pathways for each of the nine

industries of focus (Aerospace and mechanical engineering, Finance, Healthcare, Tourism, Natural Resources, Manufacturing, Ranching/Agriculture/Forestry, Cybersecurity/IT, Computer/software engineering,) have been developed (see Figure 13 through Figure 20).

Each pathway horizontally outlines the existing education assets (row one), the role of federal and state resources in equipping talent outside of traditional educational structures (row two), work-based learning to equip prospective talent with the knowledge and skills (especially technical and employability skills) to be successful (row three), and then the career continuum for each industry with specific roles and salary ranges (row four). The pathways also illustrate the connection between required educational attainment and career progression by viewing the pathway vertically (from top to bottom). Pathways provide a graphic illustration of the role that must be played by all members of the workforce continuum to be successful, as well as convey the educational attainment needed by future workers to achieve their personal career goals.



SOURCE: Lynna Cummings

Figure 12—View of Boston Hill

AEROSPACE AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

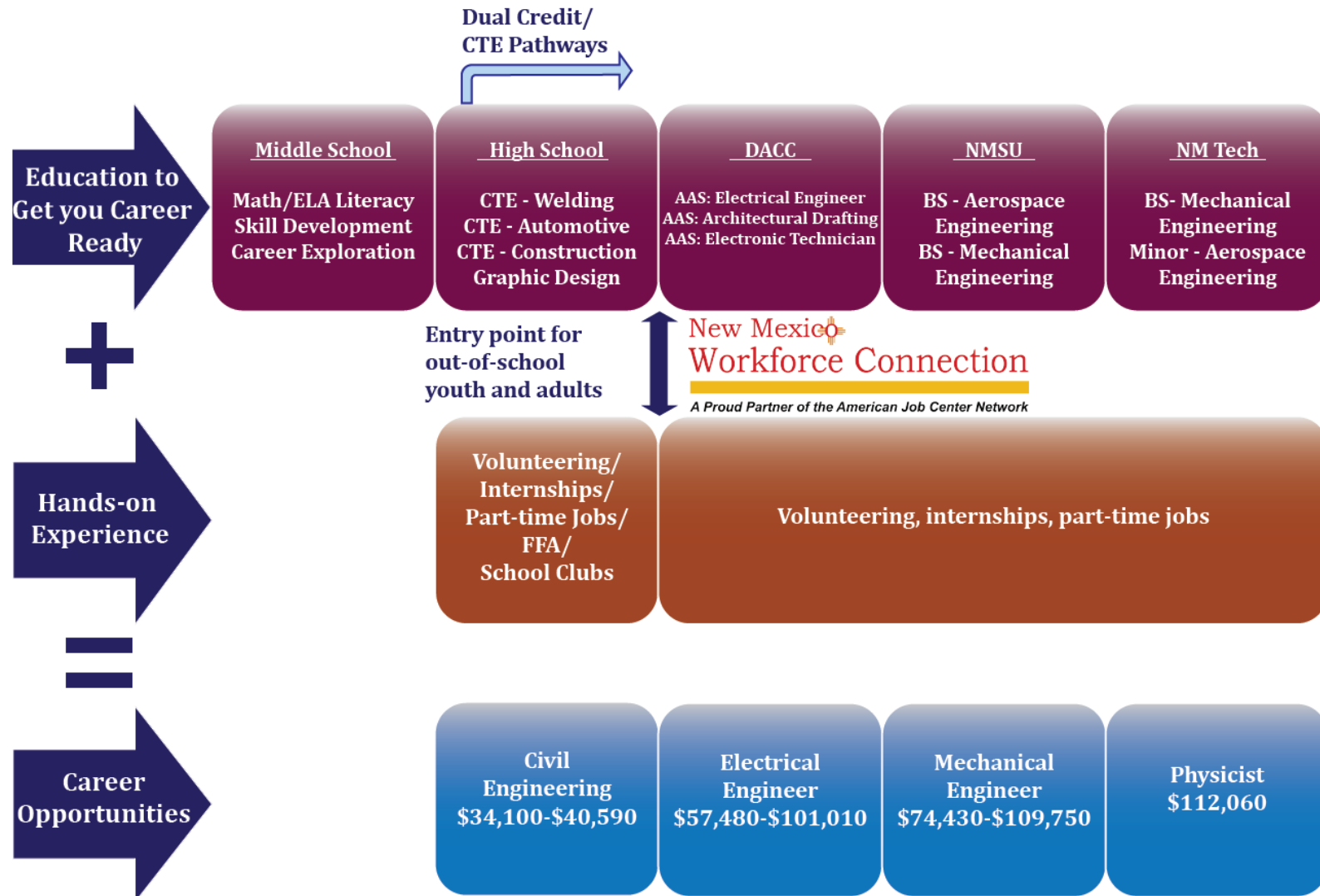


Figure 13—Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering Pathway

CYBERSECURITY/IT

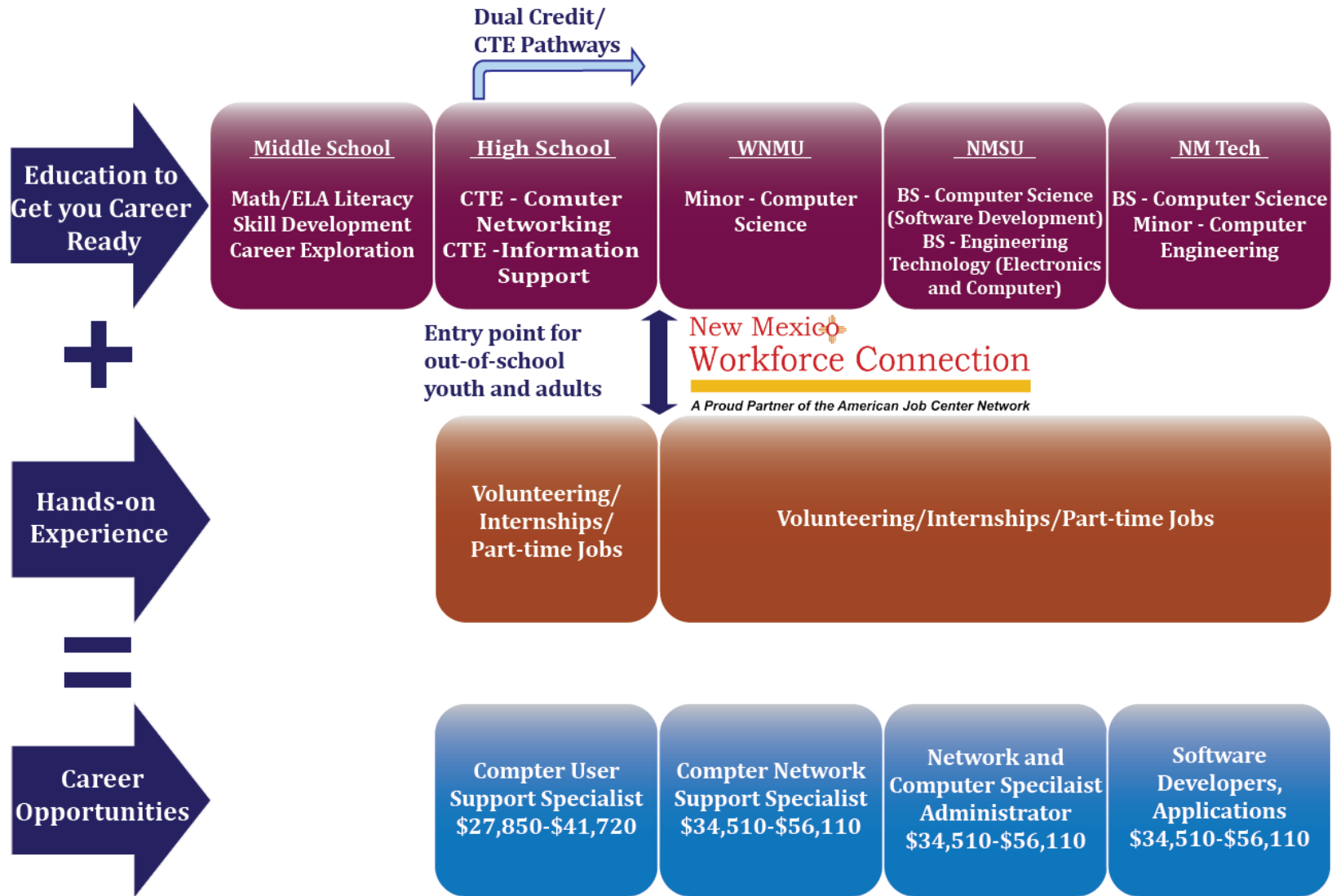


Figure 14—Cybersecurity/IT Pathway

FINANCE

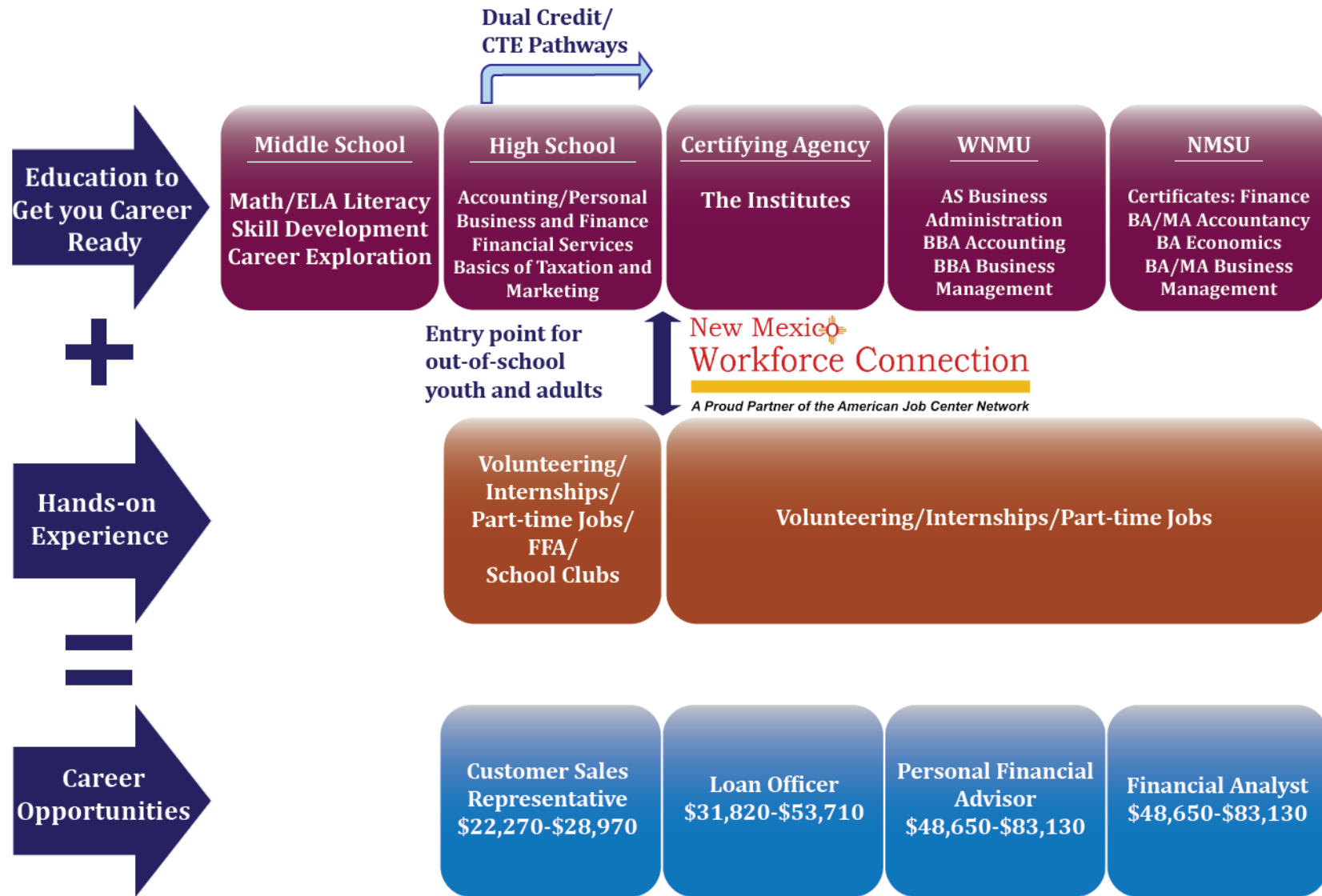


Figure 15—Finance Pathway

HEALTHCARE

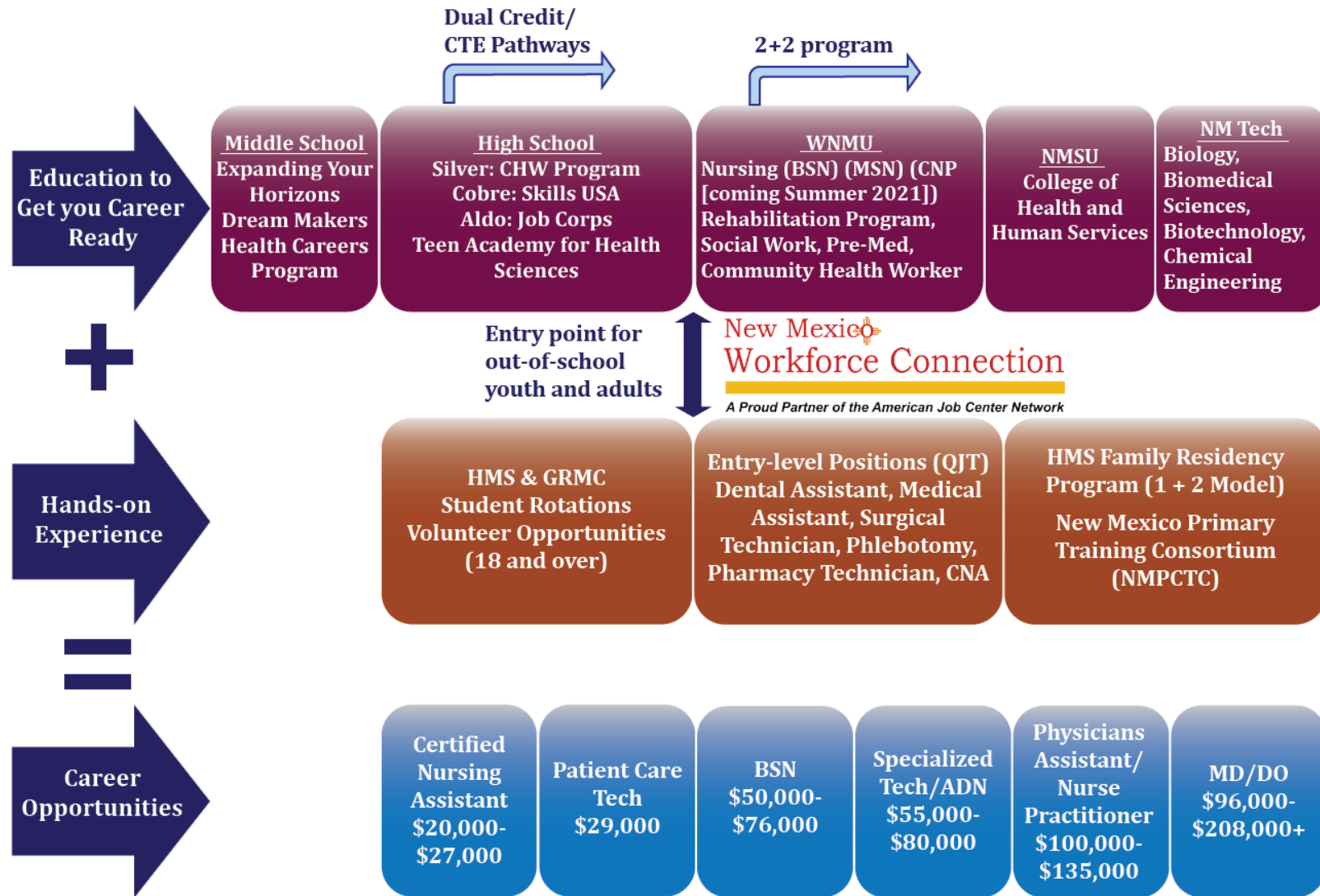


Figure 16—Healthcare Pathway

MANUFACTURING

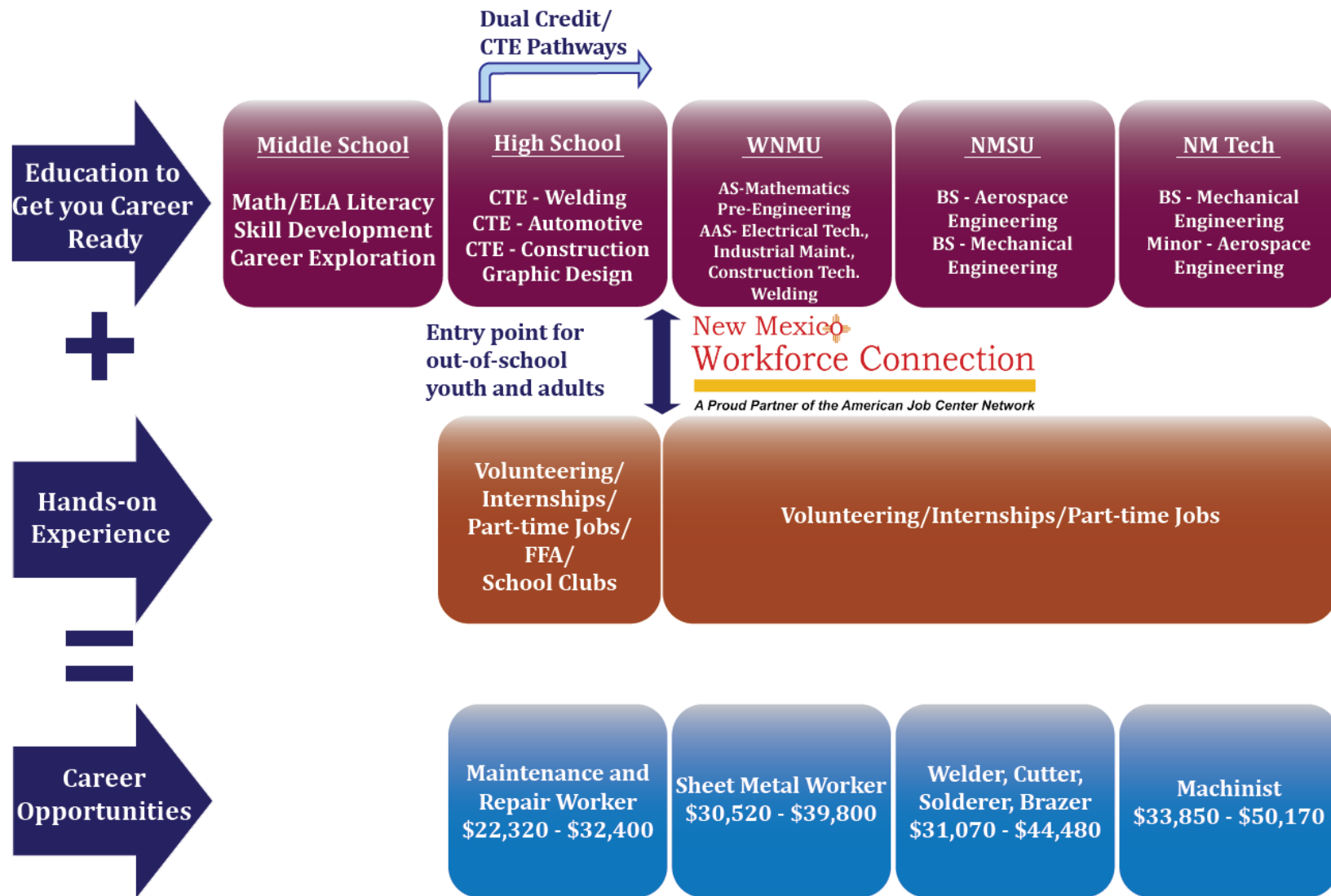


Figure 17—Manufacturing Pathway

NATURAL RESOURCES

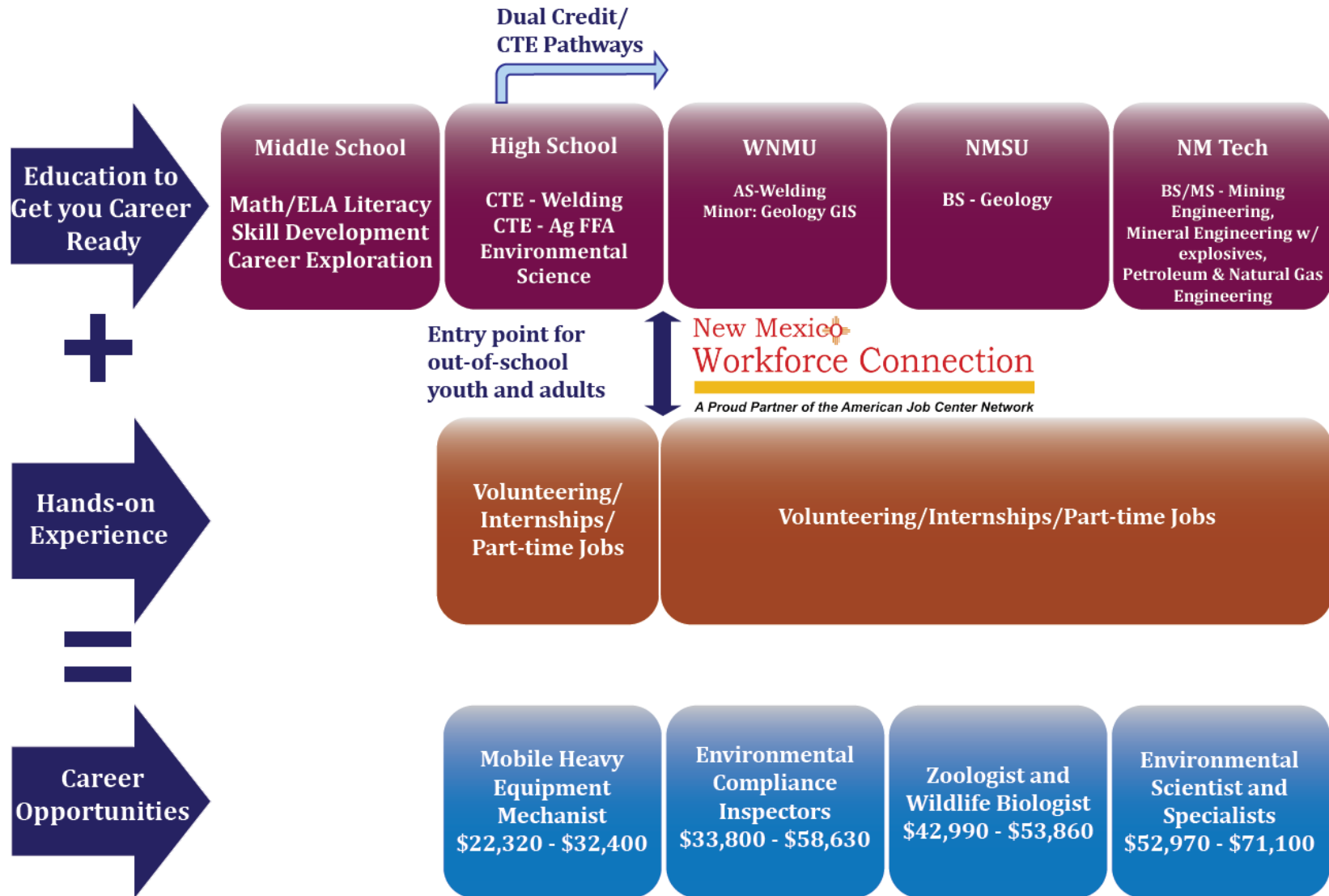


Figure 18—Natural Resources

RANCHING/AGRICULTURE/FORESTRY

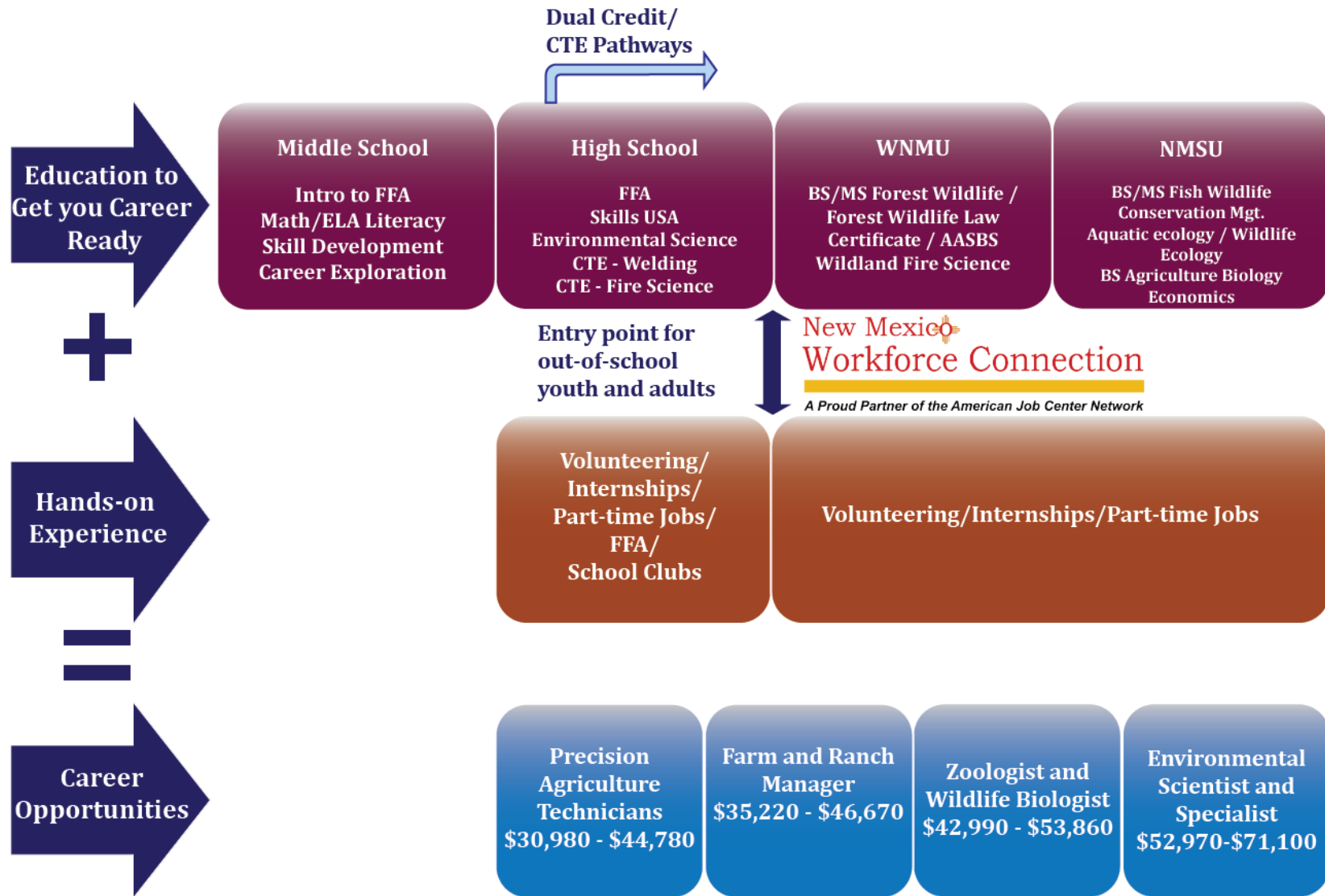


Figure 19—Ranching/AG/Forestry Pathway

TOURISM

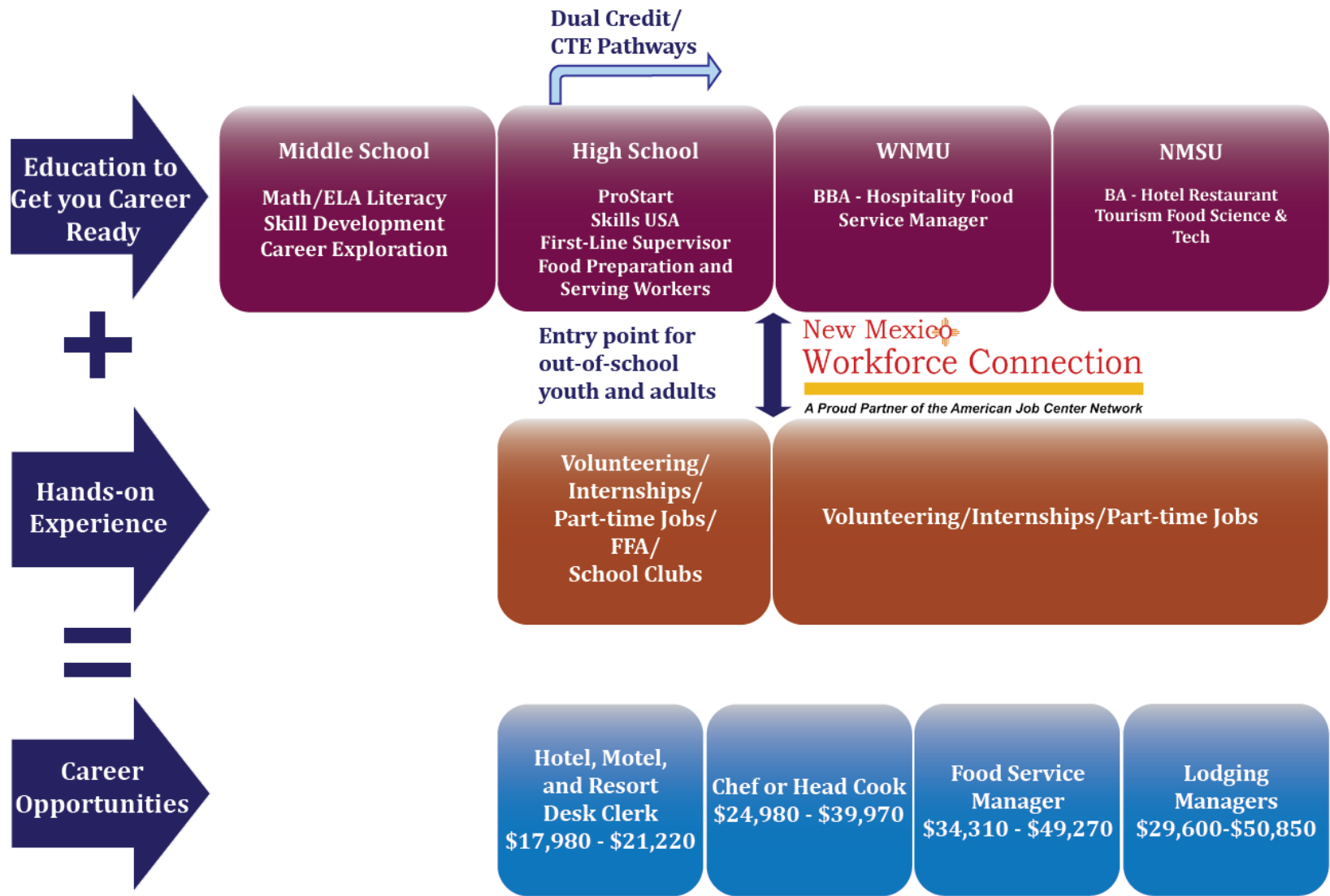


Figure 20—Tourism Pathway

Gila
HIKE & BIKE



Gila
HIKE & BIKE



BUILDING THE REGION'S TALENT PIPELINE

Successfully building a Comprehensive Approach to Talent Development (Figure 4) requires the connection and coordination of all players and tools in the continuum toward the nine target industries and mobilizing target audiences to gain the knowledge and skills needed to become active contributors to the Region's workforce and economy.

However, one overarching initiative must be done to ensure the success of the rest. Across the County, the greatest barrier to success is the overarching lack of awareness on a host of connected issues, and it must be addressed first.

AWARENESS

Across the community, huge awareness gaps exist that prevent access, engagement, and partnership vital to changing the current underproduction of, and misalignment between, education and skills needed in the Region's current workforce talent. This lack of awareness is driven by a predominantly negative narrative of the region that perpetuates low expectations, hopelessness, disconnects, and resistance to collaboration among the various players in the pipeline, which exacerbates conditions related to the pernicious nature and corresponding impacts of generational poverty, a shortage or complete absence of positive role models, and the absence of a common vision for success.

Therefore, our strategic initiatives must target all participants in the talent pipeline and build awareness about:

- Career exposure, or the overarching knowledge of the industries themselves, the numerous career opportunities within each industry, the education and skills needed for

success in these careers, the earning potential and opportunities for advancement:

- Existing Department of Workforce Solutions resources, including:
 - [New Mexico Career Solutions](#)
 - [My Next Move](#)
 - [Why I work](#)
- Career exploration in the K-12 system through Career and Technical Education, Programs of Study, and the value of the Early College High Schools, including efforts to engage parents in better guiding their children.
 - We will seek to build a connected series of experiences throughout the education continuum, informed by the Workforce Readiness Forum Report prepared for the Bridges of Southern New Mexico that creates a progression toward career focus for youth and preparedness for their futures.
 - Level 1 – Focus on career exploration of relevant industries through speakers, seminars, job fairs, and field trips.
 - Level 2 – Exposure to more in-depth activities that facilitate narrowing of potential careers that bring students into the experience of a career, including field trips, job shadowing, one-on-one mentoring, and inquiry-based interviews. Also includes support for teachers and mentors.
 - Level 3 – Most intensive and narrow and focused on internships and provides legitimacy as potential workforce professionals.

- Necessary skills and knowledge needed for success, including employability (or “soft”) skills; STEM-related coursework and skills; the importance of being bi- and tri-lingual (basic and professional English and Spanish, as well as another language, like computer coding); the importance of a clean background (i.e. criminal history, drug and alcohol offenses, and credit checks). This includes launching a campaign for employers and prospective candidates to implement some of the Southern Regional Education Board NM Labor Market Analysis Recommendations, including identifying technical and workplace readiness standards and assessments, like WorkKeys and ACT⁶, to:
 - Communicate the value of the credential and encourage them to recognize, request, or require the credential
 - Identify the standards in these foundational skills and establish them as prerequisites for entering WIOA-approved training programs
 - Encourage job seekers to pursue the credential as part of an intentional career planning process
- Elevate awareness and understanding of skills-based assessment in partnership with the Community Action Agency⁷, Tresco⁸, Workforce Connections, and HELP-NM⁹ with employers and potential talent
- Available training resources, including education providers, workforce development contractors that support potential talent with federal and state-funded programs

- Real-time job and career opportunities including sites like indeed.com, upwork.com, fiverr.com, flexjobs.com, etc.
- Opportunities for the business community to play a role in solving their collective challenges

To ensure the broadest access and deepest penetration of information into target audiences, we will launch a coordinated set of communication efforts to overcome awareness gaps for target audiences, including the following:

- New Mexico TrueTalent mobile app that connects career exploration with education and skill-building resources for in-school youth, Opportunity Youth, and adult audiences
 - The beginnings of New Mexico True Talent can be found on the Bridge of Southern New Mexico’s website at www.NewMexicoTrueTalent.org
 - Integrate NM Department of Workforce Solutions’ Students Work portal into candidate screening/job opportunities for youth workers
- Use Bridge’s centralized regional website with round-the-clock access to resources, including industry career exposure, real-time job opportunities, educational resources, as well as access to WorkKeys, to build the ability of prospective talent to increase their skill-based learning and enable earning of industry-recognized credentials
- Engage students, teachers, professionals, and parents using social media apps and websites to increase exposure and provide opportunities to connect with target audiences

⁶ For more information, see Appendix I.

⁷ For more information, see Appendix I.

⁸ For more information, see Appendix I.

⁹ For more information, see Appendix I.

POLICY

Underlying the construction and sustainability of this comprehensive continuum is federal, state, and local policy that simultaneously removes barriers and strengthens engagement and connection of all players. Driven by the deep poverty of the majority of residents in our region, federal funding through the Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act (WIOA) must be better directed in support of career education, skills-based hiring, and job placement in the nine industry sectors for those they serve. The federal mandate for WIOA to collaborate with other federal funding streams presents the opportunity to create new opportunities for combining workforce revenue streams and jointly-funded projects by expanding the partnership between WIOA and Carl B. Perkins Career and Technical Education funding at the public and higher ed levels. Ideally, Western New Mexico University has a pivotal role to play in cultivating credit and non-credit-bearing programs to skill-up available talent for success in the career continuum of our nine target industries, and these additional funding sources would expand its ability to do so.

In considering the identified target audiences, federal investments receive the best return on investment by prioritizing services to support young parents:

- Help them secure living wage jobs to return to school
- Streamline state services (human services, work, education) and align policies and funding to incentivize bundling services
- Provide year-round support for parents who are students by coordinating dependable quality childcare, workforce development or post-secondary education programs with wrap-around services year-round

- Increase access to benefits for student parents, prioritizing the role of community colleges

State-funded agencies and contractors in the Workforce Talent pipeline can provide better, more direct advisement and support for their clients to engage in higher-skilled, higher-paying career fields. They are the primary sources for delivery of skills-based hiring tools and credentials but need to foster deeper connections with employers in these nine sectors to gauge clearly exactly what skills are needed, which proficiencies can be measured by WorkKeys, and build the relationships with educational providers to increase the skills of their clients.



SOURCE: Visitsilvercity.org

Figure 21—Local Artisan Shop

State policy in support of successful workforce development efforts should advance the following solutions:

- Tax credit incentives for employers who participate in internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, Next Generation Sector Partnerships, as well as the hiring of remote workers based in rural communities
- Improved data sharing agreements between public education, higher education, and the Department of Workforce Solutions
- Fund a remote work certificate program through WNMU to provide employers with confidence that employees are adequately trained to work, communicate, and collaborate effectively in a remote work environment
- Support broadband initiatives to improve connectivity and home office and co-working assistance to unlock the remote work potential of the County’s workforce

Provide rural workforce housing incentives that will address the shortage of adequate housing that is attractive to higher-wage remote-work occupations. Incentivize high schools to expand industry-driven career and technical education in partnership with community colleges leading to industry-valued credentials upon high school graduation. California and Colorado provide models for this in California’s Strong Workforce Program established in 2016’s [CA S 830](#), and Colorado’s Career Development Success Pilot Program established in 2016’s [CO H 1289](#).

WIOA contractors should be encouraged to adopt the framework presented in [WorkAdvance: Testing a New Approach to Increase Employment Advancement for Low-Skilled Adults](#), to support successful employment in target sectors through:

- Intensive screening of applicants’ ability to complete training and meet employer needs

- Identify and overcome barriers to successful employment and education, including access to high-quality childcare, transportation, and other wrap-around services

- Provide sector-focused pre-employment services
- Sector-specific occupational skills training
- Sector-specific job development and placement
- Post-employment retention and advancement services

The full report can be found [here](#).

Grant County government and the Town of Silver City have sought to better understand their role in cultivating a higher-skilled workforce, as evidence by the creation and level of engagement in the CWA. Their partnership in this continuum provides the opportunity to leverage regularly occurring functions of government (procurement requirements, community-focused communications and meetings, economic development, etc.) with city- and county-sponsored programs that can be integrated into the continuum. Additionally, both entities should add performance-driven metrics about workforce development into their internal processes and identify opportunities for innovation and engagement. Finally, as employers themselves, both entities have the opportunity to “lead by doing” by integrating youth employment opportunities and job shadowing, as well as partnerships with workforce development contractors to leverage tuition assistance and skill-building resources for low-skilled workers, into the function of government.

Grant County seeks to revitalize its efforts to boost services and quality of life for Mining District residents. The County has an important role to play in uniting its governmental services with the local school districts, Western New Mexico University, and workforce service providers to maximize co-location of services

in the communities where these families live. Leveraging the physical spaces that are already there through the community schools model would enable greater access for families to education, training, career exploration, online courses, assessment tools, childcare and transportation assistance, and truly, a comprehensive set of services to help families break through the geographic barriers that perpetuate barriers to employment.

The traditional educational approach into each career field will be dependent upon education policy, which will either work for or against our efforts. Prioritizing funding and student participation in Career and Technical Education Pathways and dual-credit courses will propel students into post-secondary engagement, attainment, and success more quickly, while also proving to increase high school graduation rates in the region. These investments have the greatest return on investment potential, due simply to the scalability potential that will reach more students and increase the likelihood that they will graduate with both their high school diploma and an employer-valued career credential. Whether they go straight into the workforce or on to pursue additional higher education, maximizing cooperation between educational institutions dramatically improves the future earning potential of students from high school graduation and beyond.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

The role of business in building its own current and future talent pool is paramount, and frankly, has been the key ingredient missing from the successful development of a larger pool of skilled and ready talent. However, we have already seen the potential for dramatic change that occurs when the business community is mobilized toward a shared goal.

Work-and-learn programs are powerful, meaningful ways to support business engagement, while closing the “soft-skills gap” among young workers. The New York Times reported that 40% of college students work at least 30 hours per week, and one in four work full time. The US Chamber of Commerce, the [National Network Connecting Learning and Work](#), and other provide models for business engagement.

As we approach our work, we will advocate for the role of business in these nine industries (and so many others that benefit from the economic empowerment of citizens in our region) to be thought of in terms of five “ships”:

- Leadership – Shaping and influencing instruction
- Mentorship – Real experience shared by real experts in the field
- Internship – Work-based learning experiences for students
- Apprenticeship – Work-and-learn experiences that lead directly to jobs
- Externship – On-site learning experiences for teachers

Banks are uniquely incentivized to play a role in community workforce efforts by the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), which awards CRA credits to those who participate or invest in workforce development. This includes direct participation with workforce boards, hiring youth interns, and providing financial literacy to youth and young adults. This would be especially meaningful for Opportunity Youth.

LEADERSHIP

Across the talent continuum, the voice of employers and industry leaders should drive the education and engagement of all. Establishing industry-led, cross-sector advisory committees, the

voice of business will drive construction of their industry’s talent pipelines, including:

- Identifying required proficiencies needed for specific jobs within industries
- Influencing curriculum and instruction for all education providers in the continuum
- Identifying the right mix of skill-based hiring tests and certifications to be successful
- Modifying industry pathways as needed

With business in the driver’s seat, it becomes a thought partner in solving the persistent problems that have hindered their industries’ ability to thrive and grow. The Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings has developed a community-college specific model for this in its report, “Connecting Community College with Employers: A Toolkit For Building Successful Partnerships”, that could be more broadly replicated across all of the educational institutions.

Initial efforts should begin by leveraging the already established industry-focused initiatives of the CWA:

- 1) Finance
- 2) Healthcare
- 3) Tourism
- 4) Natural Resources
- 5) Manufacturing
- 6) Ranching/Agriculture
- 7) Cybersecurity/IT
- 8) Computer/software engineering
- 9) Aerospace and mechanical engineering

¹⁰ For more information, see Appendix I.

Additional workgroups for other industries will need to be established. These could be patterned after the *Next Generation Sector Partnerships* model. *NextGen* is a partnership of businesses, from the same industry and in a shared labor market region, who work with education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations to address the workforce and other competitiveness needs of the targeted industry.¹⁰



SOURCE: Agmechtronix

Figure 22—Row Crop Thinner

The business leadership will be solidified by establishing advisory committees for each industry target comprised of the following:

- A majority number of industry experts (Management level, human resources) willing to offer on-site

training/internships/apprenticeships and participation in on-campus experiences

- High school CTE teacher(s)
- CTE-aligned professor(s) who provide dual credit instruction at the University as part of their classes
- Dean or associate-dean level university representative
- Parent(s) of student in aligned CTE pathways
- Student(s) in aligned CTE pathways

Business associations, including the chamber of commerce, CWA, Rotary Club, and aligned-industry associations can take the lead in certifying qualified youth candidates through a “Hire Me First” program:

- Partner secondary and post-secondary leadership from each school district with the local Chambers of Commerce to develop and launch the program
- Use “[Making Youth Employment Work](#)” resources from the US Chamber of Commerce to guide activities of the public and private sector partners
- Replicate industry-specific partnerships using best practices laid out in the report from the US Chamber of Commerce’s “[Learning to Work, Working to Learn](#).”
- Certify the preparedness of non-traditional candidates.
- Demonstrate proficiencies in employability skills through SkillBot program¹¹ completion and/or WorkKeys assessment

Additionally, the business community in each industry sector has unlimited potential to affect current and long-term change by mobilizing their collective voice and influence with their own employees. Business leaders are a pivotal connection in support of the educational and career success of growing the next

generation of talent for this community by engaging their employees in building awareness, providing access to information and resources employees may not be aware of, and encouraging involvement in mentoring their children and other young people toward academic completion and the skills needed for career success. Employers can have immediate impact on their employees’ futures by connecting them to the value of high-quality early learning environments for their children. These investments are proven to produce the highest return on investment. The US Chamber of Commerce has studied the subject deeply, and provided guidelines on best practices for business leadership in the early education continuum [here](#).

MENTORSHIP

Community Workforce Alliance members and the Chamber of Commerce will build partnerships with middle and high schools to provide a consistent voice and presence for on-campus mentorship and career exploration and job shadowing opportunities. To truly engage students in high-quality, work-based learning experiences on campus, the CWA should develop grade-level, “real world” projects for students to engage them early in creative problem solving, team-building, communication, research, and other activities that support increasing students’ “employability skills.”

The US Chamber of Commerce has several readily implementable approaches to building and expanding business mentorship outlined in [Connected to Careers: Expanding Employer Leadership In Career Development](#):

- Represent the business community in schools
- Serve as a subject matter expert on career pathways

¹¹ For more information, see Appendix I.

- Help vetting and matching students with employers through Academic Career Experience (ACE)¹² and summer employment
- Validate skills acquired during work-based learning experiences
- Organize diverse talent sourcing networks.
 - Work with teachers to identify diverse and high-caliber candidates with interests aligned to target industries

INTERNSHIP

Across the board, to close gaps in employability skills and harness the talent of the community as early as possible, youth employment must become a focused priority. As a state, New Mexico ranks dead last (51st) in the [Opportunity Index](#) produced by Opportunity Nation. “Research shows that if young adults do not get early work experience, they are likely to sustain permanent loss of lifetime income, and consequently, dramatically lessen their contribution to the economy as taxpayers,” *Making Youth Employment Work*, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

Therefore, the business community is perfectly positioned to close this long-standing gap in partnership with the local School Districts, as well as piloting and launching summer employment for youth in the targeted industries.

- Work with district staff to strengthen recruitment and communication efforts:
 - Reconstruct employer recruitment materials
 - Reconstruct pre-placement experience for students

- Provide on-line training for employers
- Integrate industry advisory committee members into guidance for students and teachers
- Identify areas to expand industry-aligned initiatives that provide work-based learning on higher education campuses
- Expand upon the career exploration model developed by Southwestern NM WIOA board to offer career exploration or career training tracks
- Complete summer employment with WorkKeys assessment to inform students of skill-based competencies beyond their academic credentials and training to inform their personal efforts to skill up for future employment
- Integrate regional transit resources to help students with transportation barriers

The report, [Expanding Economic Opportunity for Youth Through Summer Jobs](#), by the J.P. Morgan Chase’s New Skills at Work initiative explores the importance of summer employment in not just increasing high school graduation but “paving the way to a successful progression into adulthood.” The report finds summer jobs contribute to:

- Skills development
- Increased earnings
- Improved school attendance and educational outcomes, especially for those at risk of dropping out
- Reduced involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice system
- A pipeline of workers and reduced poverty

¹² For more information, see Appendix I.

The report also points to the connection between summer jobs and long-term employment outcomes, including:

- 86% of teens who work are more likely to be employed in the next year
- Work-based learning activity can increase a young person's salary by as much as 11% for up to eight years after high school

College-level internships are already embedded in some college degree requirements, but they need to be expanded to students who don't receive college credit for work-based learning experiences. Industry advisory committees will be best positioned to identify these opportunities, and partner with peer business community members to launch new opportunities.

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is a practice traditionally discussed in the trades-related career fields, and frequently established by labor unions in specific fields. In our County, there is a huge shortage of paid apprenticeship and cooperative opportunities for entry-level and low-skilled workers, even in the trades, but the reality is that apprenticeships can be established in any career field. According to Forbes Magazine, in the article, [*Why Investing in Apprenticeships Makes Good Dollars and Sense*](#):

- Every federal dollar invested in apprenticeships programs brings a [*27-dollar return on investment*](#)
- Every dollar spent by the employer earns 1.47 dollars in return in increased productivity, reduced waste, and greater front-line innovation
- Apprenticeship combines hands-on training with college coursework and is paired with scalable wage increases

- Earn-while-you-learn models lead directly to mastery of a trade without the burden of high tuition fees and student loan debt
- Key to addressing youth unemployment and inequitable incomes.
- Nine of 10 apprentices are employed immediately upon finishing their training.
- 87% of apprentices become employed.
- Apprentices have an average \$50,000 starting wage, which leads to them out-earning their peers by \$300,000 over their careers.

That said, the CWA can identify key points of transition from low-skilled to mid-skilled jobs, or mid-skilled to high-skilled jobs in each of the nine industries and cultivate apprenticeships to grow the capacity of the workforce already in place, or open opportunities to those who can demonstrate skill-based proficiency and have the potential to step into higher-skilled, higher-paying opportunities.

An apprenticeship model already developed by Dr. Joseph Goins for the NM Public Education Department could be implemented for WIOA/WFC clients using those funding streams to support on-the-job training in each industry sector. Apprenticeship candidates could be high-school graduates that hold a career certification. Additionally, the chambers of commerce and CWA could recruit their members into the effort, cultivating at least one apprenticeship program per the targeted industry. Jobs for the

Future provides support for these partnerships through its Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning.¹³

The State of Colorado has taken this effort on through [CareerWise Colorado](#), which targets youth apprenticeships. After finding that their educational system only works for 18-23% of their students, it created a blended approach for education, guaranteed transfer courses in higher education, and competency-based graduation, learning, and work at community colleges. The CareerWise Colorado apprenticeships split time between high school, work on the job, and pathway-specific skills training. This approach could be developed locally and deployed as a pilot.

EXTERNSHIP

The key to long-term change for workforce preparedness lies in better educating teachers on the needs of business and industry, so that information can be translated into classroom instruction and work-based learning opportunities on a far grander scale. Across the country, businesses are using teacher externships to “train the trainer” and equip the teacher force with up-to-date experiences, equipment, and information to improve delivery of instruction.

Implementation should be tied to each industry advisory committee’s work. A publicly available guide for establishing a successful externship program, Career Academy Support Network’s [Teacher Externship Guide](#) can guide the development of externships in each industry. Recommended processes include:

- Application required
- Two weeks of on-site training
- \$1,200 stipend for the teacher

- Support beyond the externship
- Cross-sector curriculum and project development
- Professional development for their peers
- Business mentoring from host site with teachers’ students in the following year

Grant funding will be sought to pilot these externships, but ideally, their value will become so apparent that industry partners integrate them into their annual budgets to ensure sustainability.

STEM-H/STEM/STEAM PROFICIENCY

STEM-related education, and especially STEM-H, is a vital thread that must be woven across all efforts to equip the skilled and ready workforce. Several industry targets are driven by STEM-related skills and knowledge, and every list of highest paying career fields based on education status is dominated by STEM degrees. STEM graduates tend to out-earn their non-STEM peers. A 2014 report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce found that “demand for applicants with STEM competencies far outstripped the 5% of professions traditionally determined to be in the STEM fields. STEM-literate graduates are not only needed in those fields, but also in areas like advanced manufacturing, mining, and utilities and transportation.” Significant career opportunities in STEM fields have the potential to propel the economy forward with the plethora of jobs on the region’s four military bases through both military and civilian job opportunities, including NASA’s Johnson Space Center that is part of White Sands Missile Range, and Spaceport America, which is growing in use and opportunity.

The Bridge of SW New Mexico has identified harnessing the collective STEM assets of this region to facilitate the construction

¹³ For more information, see Appendix I.

and mapping of a [STEM Ecosystem](#) embedded in the creation of a Workforce Talent pipeline, while also being intentional about demystifying STEM so that it is both approachable and engaging for audiences who traditionally are underrepresented in STEM fields.

Partnering with the Bridges of SW New Mexico in growing a STEM Ecosystem will provide valuable learning in a connected set of metrics that have huge implications for vaulting this County from low rankings in math and science to the head of state and national proficiencies. A STEM Ecosystem would produce a harvest of benefits, including:

- Cultivating successful college-goers and graduates in STEM-related majors by prioritizing the collective impact model
- Increasing the success of Hispanic and low-income students in STEM education, and therefore, future careers in high-paying, middle-skill and high-skill STEM careers
- Developing a localized model for a cloud-enabled workforce built on Project Lead the Way¹⁴ and aligned similarly to the Kentucky Cloud Career Pathways public-private collaboration¹⁵
- Enhancing in-school and after-school implementation of evidence-based STEM curriculum and integration into hands-on learning in community-wide experiential learning environments and MakerSpaces
- Making intentional connections that lead students into interest-area-aligned Career and Technical Education pathways that include college-level dual credit coursework

- Piloting and growing “near peer” learning between higher education and public education students by fostering reverse-tech transfer, the cultivation of a new training ground for future STEM teachers, and mobilizing a corps of STEM mentors in the community
- Closing outcome gaps for specific student groups while increasing access to post-secondary education for low-income and Hispanic students
- Fostering engagement in STEM-focused learning and academic pathways with bi-lingual mobile technology to encourage student and family engagement in STEM
- Integrating business community mentors into the ecosystem to informing students of real and relevant STEM-focused careers locally and regionally
- Incorporating experiential learning for students using the Building Experiential Skilled Student Talent (BESST) model¹⁶ used by Tech Parks Arizona of the University of Arizona

Grant County and the region are uniquely equipped for success in this effort. The presence of Western New Mexico University is of huge benefit. STEM instruction, industry-related leadership, entrepreneurial development, and community engagement through a host of after-school programs provides a solid foundation upon which we can build. Western New Mexico University produces several of the career certifications and associate degrees deeded in the eight industries and offers dual credit coursework to high school students.

A STEM Ecosystem also solves a critical need in the region. The state of New Mexico suffers from dismal proficiency scores on

¹⁴ For more information, see Appendix I.

¹⁵ For more information, see Appendix I.

¹⁶ For more information, see Appendix I.

reading, math, and science tests, but this need not be the case. This region can cultivate a successful STEM Ecosystem by positioning WNMU as the lead liaison for this effort. Additional opportunities to build the quality of our STEM instruction across the community includes the following:

- Supporting and expanding of in-school STEM instruction through Project Lead the Way (Engineering, Computer Science, Bio-Medical) and out-of-school STEM enrichment programs conducted by the College of Education
- Providing on-going professional development for educators
- Partnering graduate students with educators and cultivating mentorship opportunities with students throughout the PK-12 system
- Inviting undergraduate students to engage in afterschool STEM programs and potentially transform them into future STEM educators
- Expanding the “Strategic Doing” model into STEM-related high-school Programs of Study

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

The PK-12 system is the foundational education pillar upon which a highly-skilled, highly-paid talent pipeline can be built. If we seek to “grow our own” workforce, which includes maximizing the career opportunities for young people in the region and reducing the much-discussed issue of “brain drain,” then the role of public education in equipping the region’s young people for the targeted industries is paramount. Of course, the jobs must be there for them; that is why the CWA’s dual mandate is economic development policies and actions which are intended to create opportunities and new jobs within the County.

A recent [report](#) by the World Economic Forum indicates that 65% of elementary school students now will be employed in jobs that don’t exist today. Success in cultivating our talent demands that we prepare students not just for today’s jobs, but for those we cannot see. Education, and especially the high school experience, must evolve to meet the demands of this future, if we are to serve this region’s youth well. Education expert Tony Wagner recently identified [seven “survival skills of the future”](#) outlined by the business community that are consistent with the employability skills demanded by employers today:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurship
- Effective oral and written communication
- Accessing and analyzing information
- Curiosity and imagination

This emphasizes why business engagement in the education continuum is not just important—it is imperative.

Additionally, the important of high-quality, early learning experiences, which are proven to increase students’ ability to achieve grade-level reading and math proficiency, is critical to start as many students on the right trajectory. Students who are ready to read are ready to learn.

A recent study of employer vacancies by the Department of Workforce Solutions indicated that New Mexico employers ask for higher academic credentials for their jobs than similar jobs in other parts of the country to secure some level of assurance about the ability of candidates to perform basic reading and math skills. This trend means employers are self-creating a credentialing crisis and an unforced misalignment between available jobs and

available workers. We simply must increase student proficiencies in foundational subjects.

According to the New Mexico Public Education Department, only 25.7% of Grant County's 4th Graders score proficient in reading, 22.7% score proficient in math, and 54% score proficient in science.¹⁷ Rallying support to double or triple these proficiency rates must be achieved. It is important to rally community support behind the early learning community and support the roles of Ngage¹⁸, Head Start¹⁹, and AVANCE²⁰, among others. Parents should be encouraged to understand the importance of literacy in English and/or Spanish as foundational to student success.

In fact, best-practice dual language programs across the County's school districts should be expanded to equip more students with proficiency in both languages, refining their skills in the high school to be bilingual in industry-relevant terms. Integration of a third language, computer coding, would be a game-changer for the future prospects of these young people.

The County also needs a school culture that encourages parents as partners with teachers to support student success. Community schools are emerging an important component in middle school to foster better, stronger connections among non-profit partners and those who provide wrap-around services to families that are also proven to support student success in the middle-school to high-school transition. Relationships with the Community Action Agency, Workforce Connections and HELP-NM, the Chamber of Commerce, and others will provide comprehensive, two-

generation support and access to education and resources for students and parents simultaneously.

Silver Consolidated School's dual-credit model has shown us how to help young people succeed in graduating high school and persisting into college. This model has demonstrably shown:

- Career-focused, course-aligned pathways through high school and into postsecondary and successful in helping first generation, low-income, and primarily Hispanic high school students to:
 - Outperform their own expectations of themselves
 - Earn valuable career certifications and associate degrees simultaneously with their high school diplomas
 - Not waste valuable time (and the corresponding cost) in college remediation courses, which are highly correlated to non-completion in higher ed
 - Graduate high school ready to go on in learning (to higher degrees) or earning (to higher skilled jobs and careers)
- Students who begin these pathways succeed regardless of their incoming GPAs when they experience education in this environment
- The handoff between K-12 and post-secondary is most effective when it takes place during the high school experience
- The best return on investment of valuable state dollars in promoting educational success

¹⁷ Calculated using a weighted average of the 2018 School District Report Cards based on student counts.

¹⁸ For more information, see Appendix I

¹⁹ For more information, see Appendix I

²⁰ For more information, see Appendix I

Bringing these important lessons to scale to help even more students will not just transform student success and increase graduation rates across the continuum, it will embed career preparation into the K-12 system to transform the readiness of young people across our community. The very best investments in career preparedness will be made within the educational system, rather than higher cost of creating change outside of it. The adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” rings true with targeting the best investments of time and resources in connecting education and workforce preparedness.

Propelling students from 8th grade and through their high school years provides the opportunity to build a culture of high expectations, the value of completion, and instilling a commitment to lifelong learning. Students need to understand not just the “what” of education but “why” education is so important to their futures.

The in-school youth career preparedness continuum should include both instruction and work-based learning:

- 8th grade: career exploration, Next Step Plan,²¹ Programs of Study, career days
- 8th-10th grade: job shadowing, on-campus mentoring, Innoventure entrepreneur development
 - Summer employability skills instruction through Skillbot with a micro-badge to show completion
- 11th-12th grade: Career and Technical Education, Dual Credit Courses, Student Internships, Apprenticeships, and WorkKeys certifications

- Across the continuum: CTE Teacher Externships in relevant industries funded through a combination of employer contributions and grant funding

According to “Preparing Students for College and Career in the US: The Effects of Career-Themed Programs of Study on High School Performance”, program of study enrollment improved students’ probability of graduation by 11.3% and that each additional CTE credit earned in programs of study increased their probability of graduation by 4%.

Career exploration should begin no later than middle school (as well as training in the Microsoft Office Suite, which is completely absent from the education continuum at this time), transitioning into Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways and career-focused Programs of Study, or one of the two Early College High Schools, to guide students through their high school experience and provide early exposure to college-level work through integrated dual credit coursework.

Changes at the state level have created Career Clusters that already exist and are aligned to our targeted industries:

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
- Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications
- Health Science
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

The success of the pathways can be maximized by the integration of employability skills (or soft skills), work-based learning, and skill-based assessments that give young people a better

²¹ For more information, see Appendix I.

understanding of their readiness for the work environment. Recommended courses of action to achieve this include the following:

- Embedding WorkKeys into student experiences
- Making work/school look/feel more like school/work.
 - The local SCORE chapter (based in Las Cruces) offers a team of mentors at no cost to the schools to provide students with the connections between how they approach school and how that ties to future workforce success

High school graduation is the first point that simply must be completed, but then students need to understand a better, richer, more complete story about the options available to them in higher education: career certifications, associate degrees, bachelor degrees and above. The current “university for all” strategy is failing far too many students, and there is a general lack of awareness about other options, including the value of the community college and vocational education in building skills for the future. Students should be encouraged to cross multiple “finish lines” in their education, with two at a minimum—and those should be best suited to the careers students wish to pursue.

As workforce education expert Kevin Fleming²² outlines, student counseling should be completely flipped, to focus first on on what career a young person seeks to engage, what education is needed to be qualified for that career, and then what college or university program is best able to get them there successfully. This provides the opportunity to evaluate pay scales in the positions they wish to pursue and then make the best decisions on how to use post-secondary education to give them the best return on their academic investment. For example, two-year degree nurses make

only \$1 per hour less than four-year-degree nurses but having a four-year degree may open doors of opportunity that two-year degree nurses would not qualify for. And engineering technicians (two-year degrees) can easily out-earn numerous four-year degrees. Transforming high school counseling from the function of college entrance exams to providing better cost-benefit analysis for students would create transformational change. This is a pivotal area for deeper business engagement.

We must identify far better guidance systems for students than only their high school counselors can provide on their own. Surrounding them with industry mentors and accessible technology can expand students’ ability to access career information, exploration, and advisement. A bilingual mobile technology platform would support students in real time and provide an avenue for two-way information to all members of the workforce talent continuum.

Additionally, building partnerships with other community resources, like the Community Action Agency, can expand the ability of low-income families to access the full set of benefits needed to be successful in a post-secondary environment. For example, FAFSA preparation, Individual Development Accounts, and counseling about other available resources could make a huge difference for families. Students attending LCPS’ Rio Grande Prep and the GRADS programs located in three of their high schools would benefit greatly from making strong, intentional connections between these providers.

The “lost” senior year is the subject of much discussion nationally, and as the ECHS model demonstrates, students will graduate at 100% when their senior year is focused on college-level work. Solving the dual credit funding crisis for higher education would

²² For more information, see <https://kevinjfleming.com/>

fling open the doors of opportunity to truly maximize college-level learning during the senior year. Ideally, the senior year would include:

- Summer employment for students between their junior and senior years, facilitated by ACE teachers
- Maximum dual credit coursework
- Securing a career certification or associates degree
- Engaging in work-based learning through ACE in the fall and spring
- Understanding their career readiness based upon WorkKeys and Prove It competency-based evaluation

There is great return on investment in this restructuring, just based on the increased earning power youth would have upon graduation. Students who earn a career credential alongside their high school diploma increase their annual earning power by \$5,000 on average. ECHS students who earn Associates Degrees upon graduation increasing their annual earning potential by \$12,000 on average. Whether they go on to pursue higher degrees or go straight into their careers, the ability to earn more increases their lifetime earnings, shortens the time to completion and reduces the cost of college.



SOURCE: Visitsilvercity.org

Figure 23—Western New Mexico University

CAREER CERTIFICATIONS AND TWO-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION

Economic transformation when workforce talent development becomes a driver for economic development can only be achieved when we unleash the power of the community college to provide the skills and training needed for entry-level and middle-skilled workers upon which the higher-skilled career opportunities rest. For far too long, we've over-produced at the higher-skilled end of industry but failed in creating a holistic continuum. According to Kevin Fleming's video, "[Success in the New Economy.](#)" for every occupation that requires one graduate degree, there are two bachelor-level degrees, and more than six certifications or associate level degrees needed to support them. We see this locally in the projections cited by the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine that graduates and goes into practice creates the need for nine more jobs at other, lower educational levels to support him or her.

Diminishing state funding, a gaping lack of understanding about the programs available of Western New Mexico University (and

NMSU regionally), and the former disconnect between the community college and the university has truly handicapped the people who live here. However, thanks to strong leadership at NMSU and the desire to better leverage the collective assets of the NMSU system, there is now unprecedented alignment among our higher educational partners. The launch of Aggie Pathways and a growing awareness of DACC among students and parents being advanced by The Bridge are just two early signs of progress. The purpose of the Aggie Pathway program is to provide a smooth transition for students transferring from an NMSU community college campus to the NMSU Las Cruces campus, particularly those who initially did not meet NMSU Las Cruces' recently increased admission standards. In fact, students who have been placed in Aggie Pathways are outperforming the general population of the university.



Figure 24—Silver City Clay Festival

According to the most recent data of the College Scorecard for the five main institutions serving the region:

Post-Secondary Institution	Average Annual Cost	Graduation Rate	Salary After Attending
New Mexico Tech	\$13,694	51%	\$13,694
Western New Mexico University	\$12,045	25%	\$31,100- \$52,500
New Mexico State University (Main)	\$8,625	50%	\$17,100- \$65,200
Eastern Arizona	\$7,755	27%	\$18,800- \$54,600
Cochise College	\$5,768	17%	\$17,900- \$52,600

Table 4—College Scorecard Estimates

Especially at a time when the New Mexico Lottery Scholarship covers a much smaller percentage of total educational cost, the greatest return on higher education investment will come from expanding the role of the community college(s) in creating new, or strategically consolidating industry-specific stackable training clusters, that include:

- Dual-credit pathways to career credentials for high school students
- Pathways to career certifications that can also reduce time to associate degrees
- More connected programs that connect one and two-year (1+1, 1+2, and 2+2) programs between institutions leading to employer-required certification and degrees
- Quick-turn, non-credit training programs

- Continuing and professional education for those currently in the workforce

At this unique moment in our region, Western New Mexico University has an unprecedented opportunity to drive workforce transformation by locally pioneering short-term, industry-relevant credentials through the [Right Signals Initiative](#) currently in 20 schools across the country, and learning from the work of the [Credential Engine initiative](#) funded by the Lumina Foundation, to certify the value of these credentials to local employers. These institutions can serve their communities and their students best by aligning their programs to labor market data. Several colleges were recognized for their success in this alignment with the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Leadership of our community colleges should look to these institutions for the best, readily adaptable approaches for optimal alignment, and do so in partnership with our workforce service providers.

The community college is the right answer for skilling-up adult workers with free training and online courses, computer skills, and other certifications. Taking the concept behind Community Schools, to the higher ed level, community college campuses can be used to co-locate services in “Pathway to Success” Centers located in underserved communities and in places where people already congregate.

Whether Western New Mexico University’s students come through traditional K-12 educational pathways or federal and state-funded workforce assistance programs, there is much to be gained by coalescing federal, state, and even local funding into the region’s best-equipped workforce development entity.

There is an immediate need for new certifications and degrees in Transportation and Logistics to support the employer base at the \$1.2-billion economic engine that is the Border Industrial Park, as

those programs are not currently in place. Additionally, there is a huge need to do a better job of reverse-awarding associate degrees to NMSU students in the course of their programs, providing them with an alternative qualification should they be unable to persist onto a four-year degree.

Industry advisory committees have the potential to strengthen instruction and outline the most valued credentials for their industries. This presents another opportunity to amplify business voice in solving its own workforce talent challenges.

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION

Economic development is a precept of the land-grant institution, creating economic opportunities for individuals and growth opportunities for enterprises. New Mexico State University deploys resources statewide and provides outreach to constituents in every sector of the state. Through a blend of private and public ventures, NMSU sponsors numerous opportunities to seed innovative ideas, teams, businesses, and endeavors.

One example at WNMU can be found at Studio G. The mission of Studio G is to contribute to economic development through innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development. Studio G makes available to individuals and firms the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to be successful in innovation-driven business development and entrepreneurship. Through its promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship, Studio G provides the private sector with enhanced capabilities to create economic growth.

In this regard, for some, Studio G is a sandbox—a place to play, learn, and develop the innovative mindset and to some degree skills requisite to any workforce, whether it be logistics, health

care or any of the other clusters in which the region aspires to excel, whether one is an entrepreneur or not. Others view Studio G as providing the innovative capability to be an entrepreneur—a startup, standalone company, and/or solo worker.

NMSU's contribution to innovation and capacity (and, therefore, economic development) extends far beyond Studio G. It is found in every college and campus of the WNMU system and in most academic programs. Too often, though, academic courses are packaged as off-the-shelf degree plans to be sold to households (the customer), taken by students (the consumer).

The WNMU System, which teaches innovation, must itself be innovative. Without abandoning degree plans for households and students, WNMU may need to tear them down, repackage, and distribute them differently to employers and their employees. That rethinking must begin with dual-credit, associate degrees, and certificate programs designed to meet the needs of the customer and consumer—employers and those they employ—with the flexibility to lead to baccalaureate and graduate degrees.

Scholarship, particularly that derived at the laboratories—[research infrastructure](#)—complements learning as the basis of innovation and part of the capacity that the WNMU System contributes to economic development. Research infrastructure, like degree programs before it, has been developed, packaged, and distributed for a different customer—the federal government. The research, how it is conducted, reported, and managed largely has been for that single customer. If instead the customer is the industry, the rules of engagement change rather significantly. Perhaps, like other universities—for example, Stanford—the WNMU System should consider an Industrial Contracts Office, one that supports research by negotiating agreements balancing university and industry interests.

Learning, scholarship, engagement. The mission of the WNMU System and all land grant institutions of higher education can transform to include a broader, yet more focused perspective.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES ACT (WIOA) / WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS CLIENTS

Nearly \$25 million in federal and state investments were made in New Mexico in 2017, and yet we continue to lag in several employment indicators. The Southwestern Region leads the state in unemployment rates at 7.8% in 2016. The region received \$5,337,433 and served 545 adults, or \$9,793 per person.

In Grant County, as well as in other parts of the country, high poverty rates are significant contributors to every other well-being indicator. However, hitting right at the root of poverty by targeting these investments to remove barriers and increase access for the 51% of families in the region who are 200% below poverty, change becomes both attainable and rapid.

According to the report, [Efficient, Effective Services: Career Pathways and Lasting Economic Stability for Families](#) by ASCEND at The Aspen Institute:

- An increase of \$1,000 in average household income during a child's early years is associated with school readiness
- For families experiencing an annual income of less than \$15,000 per year, a \$10,000 increase in annual income average over the first five years of a child's life nearly triples the odds the child will finish high school
- Provide real opportunities for parents with low incomes to access the education, training, and supports needed to find and keep jobs in high-demand industries that promote economic mobility and bring the promise of long-term financial security for themselves and their children

Approval of the WIOA Combined State Plan 2016-2019 gives us the opportunity to target these investments to support talent pipeline development, specifically for non-traditional pathways into the workforce. The Governor's Key Workforce System Goals include:

- The workforce system will become an employer-driven system and is not driven by government agencies, public education systems, or program providers
- The workforce system will continuously strive to maintain the maximum allowed flexibility to approve programs, allocate funding, measure outcomes and refine programs and funding as needed to drive business growth through an effective model for achieving employability
- The workforce system will exist to serve two customer groups:
 - Employers who can grow the State's economy and revenue through a prospering and expanding business that relies, in a large part, on a trained, competent, and employable workforce
 - New Mexico citizens who must strive to remain employable and skilled for current and future jobs
- The workforce system will continuously work toward the alignment of resources, policies, and metrics to ensure the workforce system meets the employability requirements of business.

The state's strategies are to:

- Strengthen workforce development and education linkages
- Emphasize work-based experiences for target populations

- Emphasize broader participation in career pathways and sector strategies
- Increase coordination efforts between employment and training activities and partner programs to improve the quality of participants' experiences and interactions with the workforce system

Recommendations for leveraging federal and state investments in support of this work will be guided by those set out in the [Efficient, Effective Services: Career Pathways and Lasting Economic Stability for Families](#) by ASCEND at The Aspen Institute:

- Create strong pathways to career jobs that offer parents a living wage and needed benefits, such as healthcare and family leave, which enables them to provide for their children and help their families attain lasting economic stability.
 - Incentivize coordination among human services providers, workforce training, and post-secondary education program
 - Increase access to quality early childhood development services
- Design services to support young parents
 - WIOA funds help young parents secure living wage jobs or return to school
 - Streamline state services (human services, work, education) and align policies and funding to incentivize bundling services
 - Provide year-round support for parents who are students by coordinating workforce development or post-secondary education programs with wrap-around services, including financial literacy
 - Increase access to benefits for student parents, prioritizing the role of the community colleges

- Make it easier for families to access critical financial support
 - On-site childcare for registration process
 - Simplify application process
 - Co-locate workforce centers where families live and create family-friendly waiting areas

Colorado has launched an internship program that reimburses employers in targeted “[Innovative Industries](#).” \$5,000 for hiring interns. This model should be integrated into the Youth Programs of the Southern Workforce Board in order to prioritize internships in these industries.



SOURCE: Visitsilvercity.org

WIOA is primarily transactional in its work. Real innovation and implementation are conducted by their contractual partners: ResCare, Dona Ana Community College, HELP-NM, Dynamic Workforce Solutions, Workforce Connections, and Job Corps. Their role in the continuum will be pivotal to mobilizing resources in support of moving their clients successfully into the talent continuum.

WIOA distribution occurs through six core programs:

- Adult Program (WIOA Title I)
- Dislocated Worker Program (WIOA Title I)
- Youth Program (WIOA Title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (WIOA Title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V of the Older American Act of 1965)

However, WIOA is now mandated to expand their partnerships to other federal funding streams in ways that maximize the power of those investments. WE will benefit by channeling as much WIOA funding as possible to work with Carl Perkins funds, which support Career and Technical Education, to use federal dollars to increase quality and quantity of career-focused instruction possible in both the K-12 and community college systems. These funds could also support the expansion of ACE to support youth employment for WIOA-qualified in-school students.

Additionally, WIOA can partner with Housing and Urban Development investments to establish “Pathways to Success” Centers in multi-family housing communities that don’t have access to a Community School or Community College. These centers would provide multi-generation support—access to WorkKeys, Prove It, Key Train, and other on-line workforce education for adults, but partner it with early learning opportunities for children 0-5. Pathways Centers would also create new jobs on site for early childhood educators and on-site facilitators to help parents with technology and access to education and resources.

There are pilot programs in other parts of the country that would benefit from public investments used as matching funds or piloting funds to implement small, targeted two-generation strategies to help young, single mothers by connecting workforce education with social services that will undergird their successful employment and high-quality early learning programs for their children while they work. The Jeremiah Program is a model that could be replicated here.

Ngage and the Success Partnership are taking the lead in establishing a community data resource to capture and evaluate information on the financial well-being of families. Their work could inform these public-sector investments, and then partner with the providers to measure not just outputs (how many are served by the programs) but rather outcomes (what happened to those in the programs because of their participation). Using this resource, we can also integrate geo-mapping functions that would help identify gaps in access to high-quality childcare, guide the realignment of the most beneficial public transit routes and times, and identify opportunities to co-locate joint educational and workforce resources in rural communities and high-need population centers that would benefit most from those services.

EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The enormity of this efforts requires a thoughtful, strategic approach to implementation. True success will be achieved over time, but we must establish mile markers along the way by which progress toward goals can be measured, course corrections can be made, and partners in the effort can be held accountable for their role in advancing transformative change.

We must also establish a baseline of quantitative countywide data to track over time and report to the community via a web-based dashboard of success:

- Higher high school, community college, and university graduation rates
- Increased number of STEM degrees (community college and university)
- Majority of students proficient in math, reading, and science
- High quality early childhood education
- Launch of a Community workforce network information hub
- Positive narrative about the community
- Improved quality of life (housing/transportation, etc.)

Other indicators that will reflect the impact of this work include:

- Increase in median income
- Reduction in the percentage of those living in poverty
 - Targeted demographics should also include children and single parent families
- Reduction in the percentage of those unemployed
- Increase in the labor participation rate

- Metrics of businesses in the county/region in each of the eight sectors:
 - New businesses attracted
 - Growth of existing businesses
 - Jobs in each of the eight sectors
 - Average wages for workers in each sector
- Increase in high school, community college, and university graduation/completion rates
- Increase in youth employment
- Reduction in percentage of Opportunity Youth
- Increase in percentage of the population with postsecondary credentials

Using the metrics provided by national and state thought leaders, we can also measure the process of change:

- Increase in access to industry-relevant training for all regional residents
- Increase in business participation in education
- Increase capacity for career exploration and counseling
- Increase in the number of community schools
- Increase in students taking dual credit courses
- Increase in number of students in Career and Technical Education pathways

Based on the recommendations of Prestige Consulting, values-based accountability for the implementation of this plan falls within four stakeholder groups who will thrive when we achieve five interconnected, overarching outcomes:

- Current and Future Workforce Talent
 - Have the mechanisms in place for them to become a skilled, competent, and ready regional workforce

- Grow regional career development and job opportunities for them
- Employers
 - Exceed employer needs with a pipeline of industry-ready job seekers
- Families
 - Improve the overall quality of life for the people of our region
- Community
 - Become a vibrant region driven by strong partnership networks across the workforce talent continuum

There are 29 indicators proposed by Prestige that will point to the progress as implementation takes place. They can be viewed in Appendix II. The CWA will develop a process for evaluation and communication toward goals that begin within the networks established by the CWA, the Community of Progress, and the industry advisory committees to establish an advisory role for each of the four stakeholder groups and the communications vehicles that will share progress and results beyond these audiences.

The CWA will integrate a mechanism for evaluating and communicating change to the community through the web portal that serves as the point of connection for all efforts, as well as reporting through The Bridge of Southern New Mexico’s website.

Leveraging the relationships in the collaborative, we will also collect and communicate qualitative and anecdotal research to convey the impact of the work on a personal level. When possible, we will identify opportunities to share lessons learned through case studies that combine qualitative, quantitative, and anecdotal data to help other communities like ours benefit from our work.

Business License Renewal

The CWA should work with local governments to track all businesses in the County. Metrics include business age, number of employees, number of establishments, and NAICS code. This will allow the CWA to use real, local data rather than relying on estimates from the Department of Workforce Solutions or Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The CWA might want to partner or hire an outside resource to do this activity, ideally with business retention and expansion efforts so there is a relationship of trust and discretion, especially when working with proprietary or confidential information. Tracking businesses will help the CWA measure and track its goals over time and will be integral to a successful program.

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SOURCE: Visitsilvercity.org

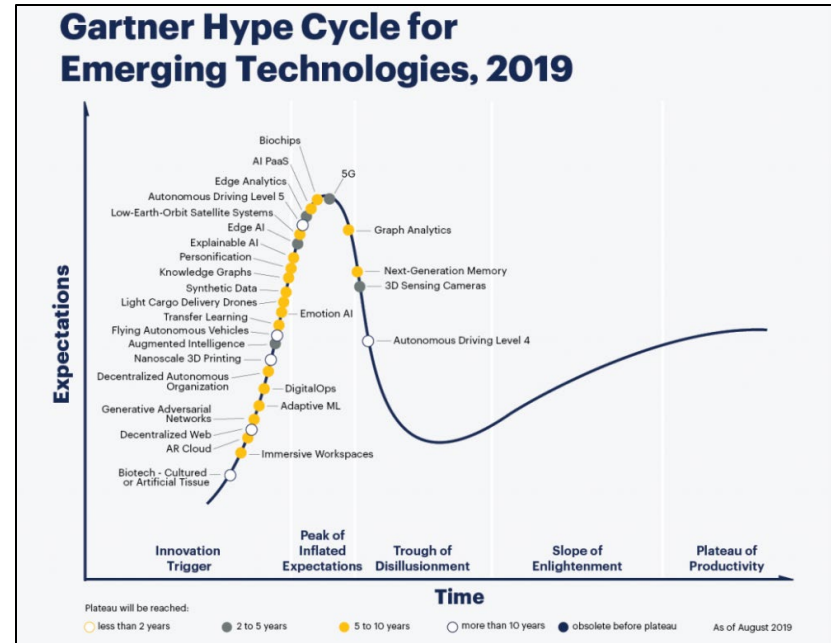
Figure 25—Trail of Mountain Spirits



PREPARING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

The workforce of today looks very different than the workforce of twenty years ago; so, too, can we expect that the workforce of twenty years from now will be very different from the workforce of today. The County must be forward-looking as it prepares its workforce for the skills and knowledge needed to compete not only regionally, but globally. Skills and knowledge needed will include industries that are reliant on new and emerging technologies such as 5G, autonomous driving, augmented and virtual reality, the blockchain and other distributed ledger technologies, robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

Of course, it will be difficult to predict what technologies and innovations are most auspicious and relevant. The CWA will need to leverage its industry and education partners to understand trends and outlooks. Good sources include Gartner (see Figure 26), which shows emerging technologies that will drive innovation and disruption, and the BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>, see Figure 27). The CWA will want to include these technologies in the curriculum and training provided by its partner organizations. The CWA should discuss often what industries and occupations should be pursued to ensure the community has relevant and well-paying jobs into the future.



SOURCE: Gartner

Figure 26—Gartner Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies

OCCUPATION	GROWTH RATE, 2018-28	2018 MEDIAN PAY
Solar photovoltaic installers	63%	\$42,680 per year
Wind turbine service technicians	57%	\$54,370 per year
Home health aides	37%	\$24,200 per year
Personal care aides	36%	\$24,020 per year
Occupational therapy assistants	33%	\$60,220 per year
Information security analysts	32%	\$98,350 per year
Physician assistants	31%	\$108,610 per year
Statisticians	31%	\$87,780 per year
Nurse practitioners	28%	\$107,030 per year
Speech-language pathologists	27%	\$77,510 per year

Figure 27—BLS Fastest Growing Occupations, 2020

TRADE AREA DEVELOPMENT AND REMOTE WORK CERTIFICATION

In addition to staying on top of new and emerging technologies, the CWA needs to leverage its economic development director, industry partners, and the chamber of commerce to expand the trade area of local businesses. Because of the prevalence of online retail and 2-day shipping options, local businesses can no longer survive on the local populace alone. Businesses must operate online storefronts to an expanded user base to see additional sales and growth. Unfortunately, many local business owners are insufficiently skilled to design, operate, and maintain an online presence. The CWA must ensure that its workforce is tech literate and that businesses are proactively expanding their addressable market from Grant County to a larger region.

Remote and freelance work opportunities have become popular in the last several years. The number of people who work from home increased by 140% between 2005 and 2019, representing more than 4.3 million workers in the United States. Remote work has only gained in popularity after COVID-19 and subsequent social distancing efforts.

The number of employers open to and offering remote work is also on the rise. Sites like [FlexJobs.com](https://www.flexjobs.com) help qualified talent find high-wage jobs that they can do from a home office or coworking site. This is beneficial for both the employer and for rural communities.

Employers have access to a larger talent pool and can hire employees in different time zones to increase output and customer service responsiveness. Employers also experience less turnover. According to Owl Labs, companies that allow remote

work have 25 percent lower employee turnover than those that do not. This is because employees who work in non-competitive job markets do not have itchy feet and often make more money than if they looked for jobs in the local market.

Employees also have access to a larger range of choices than what they can find in a local market. Unfortunately, urban flight and brain drain are persistent issues, often resulting from a lack of career opportunities in a rural community. Remote jobs can make it easier for graduating students and gives them the choice to stay in the region while still being able to work for a large company with competitive benefits.

Remote and freelance work opportunities are going to be vital for rural communities like Grant County. In the past, Grant County has relied on resource-based industries like mining; however, as the economy moves away from resource-dependent industries into service-based industries, labor will continue transitioning into service-oriented jobs. Rural economies that train their workforce with the skills needed to work remotely will make its workforce marketable to companies around the country and the world. The CWA should leverage WNMU's powerful alumni network relationships to make connections with industry leaders and businesses outside the region. This will provide the workforce with a reliable pipeline for remote work opportunities.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

As more of the workforce stays in the community, the infrastructure will need to be reevaluated and improved appropriately. This includes workforce housing, broadband, and water/wastewater, to name a few.



MURRAY HOTEL

CONCLUSION

Grant County and the region are at a unique moment in time. Policy, practice, and partners are all answering a rallying cry to change the economic future by harnessing the rich assets already here to spark economic transformation.

However, this will not happen without intentional coordination, collaboration, and action. This plan provides the actions that will be prioritized into a blueprint for progress...but it is just a plan. We will only be successful if every player in the workforce development continuum owns their role in implementation and carries it through to completion. We must transform the future of the region by boosting the earning potential of our today's talent and better equip tomorrow's talent to take on careers that may not even exist yet.

This is a clarion call for our community and our region. Will we continue to let our deficiencies define us, or will we work together towards a new narrative for Grant County and the region—one shaped by the promise and potential that is clearly within our reach? We will we create a vibrant ecosystem that captures the interest and involvement of the current and future talent of this community to propel us forward? Or will we let long-standing barriers and divisions continue to let opportunity slip through our collective fingers?

Now is the time for Grant County and the region to rise up and show other communities what can be achieved when all members of a workforce continuum work together toward a common goal—or in this case, a common set of economic development targets.

Strong, connected education pathways will build talent. Highly skilled talent will fill jobs that build businesses. Higher-paying

jobs will drive the economic potential of individuals and industries. And economic development will foster regional prosperity to fuel greater opportunity and investment that supports and sustains generational change.



Figure 28—Hikers on the Continental Divide Trail



Dove
Barkley
Coffee Gallery



LUNA
Gallery & Studio

EA
ARTS

EKLETIKAS
Gallery



APPENDIX I

ACE <https://www.acementor.org/affiliates/new-mexico/>

AVANCE <https://www.avance.org/about-avance/>

Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning <https://center4apprenticeship.jff.org/>

Community Action Agency <https://caasnm.org/>

Head Start / Early Head Start <https://www.familyservicegc.net/>

HELP-NM <https://helpnm.com/who-we-are/>

Kentucky Cloud Career Pathways <https://education.ky.gov/CTE/Pages/default.aspx>

Next Step Plan <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/college-career-readiness/next-step-plan/>

Nextgen <https://www.nextgensectorpartnerships.com/aboutnextgenerationpartnerships/>

Project Lead the Way <https://www.pltw.org/>

Skill Bot <https://www.skillbott.com/>

Tresco <https://sub.trescoinc.org/index.php/about-us-2/>

University of Arizona Tech Parks Model <https://techparks.arizona.edu/building-experiential-skilled-student-talent-besst>

WorkKeys and ACT <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/workkeys-for-educators.html>

APPENDIX II

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	VALUE PROPOSITION SUMMARY AREA	CONTRIBUTING VALUE PROPOSITIONS
REGIONAL WORKFORCE TALENT	Building a Skilled, Competent, and Ready Regional Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an educated and highly skilled workforce talent focused on academic, post-secondary, career and life readiness. • Connecting effective job seeker access to education, training, employment, and support services to succeed in the labor market. • Building marketable and transferable skills across multiple careers • Growing workforce readiness to earn income virtually. • Nurturing of a regional mindset in students and adults • Retraining of the current workforce with updated skills to address regional job opportunities for regional global competitiveness. • Capitalizing on the inherent assets of our regional talent to foster a growing regional economy
	Growing Regional Career Development and Job Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing workforce experience and career readiness through system-wide post-secondary internship and apprenticeship opportunities • Engaging students early in their own career, college, and life readiness process • Facilitating access to institutional resources/practices that enhance workforce readiness and employability. • Providing an environment that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship leading to new job creation
REGIONAL EMPLOYERS	Exceeding Regional Employer Needs with a Pipeline of Industry-Ready Jobseekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching of employer talent needs with skilled workers necessary to compete in the global economy. • Providing workplace learning opportunities and experiences to enhance workforce training and development programs beyond the classroom. • Improving productivity across the region • Creating meaningful employment options and careers including building a STEM ecosystem growing high-tech, high-wage and high-skills jobs • Anticipating future job market trends aligned with the eight identified regional industries and strategic opportunities. • Fostering an environment that encourages promoting and supporting innovation & entrepreneurship

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	VALUE PROPOSITION SUMMARY AREA	CONTRIBUTING VALUE PROPOSITIONS
REGIONAL FAMILIES	Enhancing the Quality of Lives for Families Throughout the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving economic self-sufficiency and lasting stability through post-secondary credentials and degrees • Maintaining the value of the region's bicultural identity • Breaking the cycle of poverty through increased earning capacity • Reducing the strain on regional social services • Providing lasting and meaningful economic stability and prosperity • Addressing income equity including youth employment
REGIONAL COMMUNITY & PARTNERS	Building a Flourishing Region With Strong Partnership Network and Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing the region as a destination for its high-quality, mobilized talent. • Driving a synergistic model for demand/supply side alignment and collaboration • Appreciating the value and relevance of a ready workforce • Sharing/optimizing partner resources/funding for maximum outcomes • Attracting outside resources/funding for transformed regional economy. • Advancing education, employment and economic development opportunities through strategic alliances

