



## **Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative and One Million Degrees launch “Finish What You Started”**

*Pilot program supports some college, no-degree adults in Adams County*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

DENVER, CO, April 6, 2021 - The Colorado Department of Higher Education’s (CDHE) [Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative](#) (COSI) and [One Million Degrees](#) (OMD) today announced the launch of “Finish What You Started,” a two-year pilot program providing wraparound support services for low-income Adams County, Colorado adults, aged 25+, to obtain college credentials or degrees. OMD will work closely with COSI, community-based organizations, and local college partners to recruit and enroll 150-200 students and measure outcomes, persistence towards degree completion, and improved earnings in the workforce.

With \$300,000 in funding from COSI’s Pay for Success Community Partnership Program, OMD and COSI will collaborate with the Rocky Mountain Partnership, Adams County Workforce & Business Center, Front Range Community College, and Metropolitan State University of Denver, to bring its evidence-based service model to Adams County. The goal is to expand the model statewide as part of Colorado’s plan to achieve 66% credential attainment.

“Adams County has roughly 65,000 adults with some college, but no degree,” said Dr. Angie Paccione, executive director of CDHE. “I’m thrilled that we’re piloting this program in Adams County to give more Colorado adults the opportunity to pursue their passion and finish what they start. Colorado’s economic recovery depends on building a robust workforce with the education they need to succeed in a career pathway they love.”

“On behalf of Rocky Mountain Partnership, we are delighted to be supporting the Finish What You Started pilot to ensure that this work aligns with the intentional work underway in Adams County to improve economic and social mobility in this region,” added Becky Hoffman, CEO, [Rocky Mountain Partnership](#) Backbone Team.

“We are thrilled to partner with COSI and community leaders on this important pilot program to expand education and career opportunities for Adams County residents,” said Paige Ponder, CEO of One Million Degrees, a national leader in increasing college enrollment and persistence among under-represented students through its holistic system of academic, professional, personal, and financial support. “Colorado is leading the way in putting in place the programs and processes to close attainment gaps for all students, and we look forward to being a part of this collaborative and groundbreaking initiative.”



Recruiting for the program is expected to begin in May. The program combines financial support with additional services such as career planning and student coaching, connection to community and public resources (e.g., transportation assistance, childcare centers, legal aid services, housing support, etc.), and career connections. The program will largely serve students of color and first-generation students with some college, encouraging them to re-enroll in postsecondary education and graduate.

OMD currently partners with the seven City Colleges of Chicago, plus Harper College, Prairie State College, and South Suburban College in the Chicago area, supporting 750 students, who are graduating at roughly twice the Illinois state average and are equipped with the skills necessary to help them successfully transition into the workforce. [Research](#) from the Inclusive Economy Lab at the University of Chicago finds that participation in the OMD program leads to a 35% increase in full-time enrollment and a 47% increase in full-time persistence to the next school term.

“Finish What You Started” will be structured as an outcomes-based contract with upfront funding to deliver services and bonus payments tied to successful re-enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes being reinvested into the program over time. The Colorado Department of Higher Education is among the first state higher education agencies nationwide to use the Pay for Success (outcomes-based contract) model, partnering with [Third Sector](#), who collaborates with government agencies to develop innovative contracts that align policy, dollars, data, and services to improve social outcomes, to improve postsecondary attainment by explicitly funding effective supportive services.

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