



COLORADO

Department of
Higher Education

Path4Ward 2022-23 Report

Pursuant to 23-3.3-1305,
“Fourth-Year Innovation Pilot Program”



2023

Prepared and submitted by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)

Report to the Colorado State Legislature, Colorado Department of Education,
and Colorado Office of State Planning and Budgeting
Statute: Pursuant to 23-3.3-1305

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Introduction

Implemented by [SB21-106](#), the “Fourth-Year Innovation Pilot Program,” branded as the Path4Ward Program, is a pilot initiative to award state funding to low-income students who graduate early from high school to pursue postsecondary education and training. This report includes the following statute-required data:

- Number of eligible graduates receiving funding and the high schools they graduated from
- Amounts awarded, remitted to, and forfeited by, eligible graduates
- Demographic data of participating students
- Disbursements to local education providers
- Enrollment in postsecondary programs
- Available outcome data
- Requested adjustments to the appropriation and recommended changes to pilot implementation

Program Progress

CDHE added three participating local education providers (LEPs) in November 2022 for a current total of 11, with six rural LEPs operating in a consortium. Four external partners continued to provide externally-funded support to eligible students. CDHE program staff expanded coordination with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and the Division of Private Occupational Schools to provide additional support for students requesting scholarships for occupational and workplace training programs. The program grew from **61** eligible students in Year 1 to **196** in Year 2. Students received **\$103,656.87** in scholarships. Per statute, **\$65,571.04 (63%)** of these funds were remitted to students after payment of their tuition and fees. Remitted funds can be used for external costs of attendance like equipment, books, housing, or transportation, or future education.

Enrolled Postsecondary Providers

- Academy of Dental Assisting Careers
- Aims Community College
- Arapahoe Community College
- Colorado Mountain College
- Colorado State University Ft. Collins
- Community College of Aurora
- Community College of Denver
- Elevate Salon Institute
- Elysian Academy of Cosmetology
- Emily Griffith Technical College
- Front Range Community College
- Front Range Flight School
- IBMC College
- Independent Electrical Contractors Rocky Mountain
- Lincoln College of Technology
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Pickens Technical College
- Pikes Peak State College
- Pima Medical Institute
- Pueblo Community College
- Red Rocks Community College
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Colorado Colorado Springs
- University of Colorado Denver

- University of Northern Colorado

Enrolled Postsecondary Programs (Currently Declared)

- BA, Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology
- AS, Engineering Concentration
- Nail Technician
- Aviation and Aerospace
- International Business
- AA, Anthropology Concentration
- AA, Business Concentration
- AA, Early Childhood Teacher Concentration
- AA, Health Sciences Concentration
- AS, Chemistry Concentration
- AS, Computer Science Concentration
- AS, Psychology Concentration
- AAS, Allied Health Professional
- AAS, Business Tech, Administrative Assistant
- ESL Program
- AA, Liberal Arts, Design in Business
- AA, Liberal Arts
- AS, Liberal Arts
- AAS, Marketing/Management, Business Management
- AAS, Marketing/Management
- AAS, Master Automotive Service
- Nurse Aide Certificate
- Welding Technician Certificate

Program Data for Year 2

Program funding amounts were determined by statute. Students receive scholarships based on how early they graduated: \$4,113.38 for graduating before the start of their fourth year of high school, and \$2,468.03 for graduating before the start of the second semester of their fourth year. LEPs receive \$1,371.13 per eligible student reported by July 1 each year.

| Figure 1: Eligible Early Graduates (SY22-23) | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Local Education Partner | # of 3-year grads | # of 3.5 year grads | Total Grads |
| Greeley-Evans School District 6 | 37 | 54 | 91 |
| Adams 12 Five Star Schools | 10 | 39 | 49 |
| Montezuma-Cortez School District | | 1 | 1 |
| Harrison School District 2 | 1 | | 1 |
| Charter Schools Institute (Consortium) | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Aurora Public Schools | 15 | 17 | 32 |
| Cañon City Schools | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Total: | 72 | 125 | 196 |
| Funding Awards: | \$296,163.36 | \$308,503.75 | \$604,667.11 |
| Total Eligible Students: | | | 197 |
| Maximum Potential Student Allocation: | | | \$604,667.11 |

| Figure 2: Funding Actuals (SY22-23) | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| LEP Funding Actuals | | | | | |
| LEP | # of Eligible Graduates | | | Funding Allocated | |
| Greeley-Evans SD6* | 91 | | | \$111,061.53 | |
| Adams 12 Five Star Schools* | 49 | | | \$61,700.85 | |
| Clear Creek School District | 0 | | | \$0.00 | |
| East Grand School District | 0 | | | \$0.00 | |
| Montezuma-Cortez School District* | 1 | | | \$0.00 | |
| West Grand School District | 0 | | | \$0.00 | |
| Harrison School District | 1 | | | \$1,371.13 | |
| Colorado Early Colleges* | 16 | | | \$20,566.95 | |
| Aurora Public Schools* | 32 | | | \$42,505.03 | |
| Cañon City School District* | 7 | | | \$0.00 | |
| Cotopaxi School District | 0 | | | \$0.00 | |
| Total: | 197 | | | \$237,205.49 | |
| Student Funding Actuals (current as of 11/1/2023) | | | | | |
| | Number of requests | Requests remaining | Projected forfeit number** | Projected forfeit total** | Total requested |
| 3-year funds | 24 | 48 | 39 | \$162,067.17 | \$94,607.74 |
| 3.5-year funds | 29 | 96 | 80 | \$337,132.90 | \$71,572.87 |
| Total student funds | 53 | 144 | 119 | \$499,200.07 | \$166,180.61 |
| Total Actual Awards (current student funding requests plus LEP actuals): | | | | | \$407,449.48 |

*Additional eligible graduates from these districts were reported after the July 1 deadline.

**Projected forfeit number is calculated as the number of forfeited scholarships plus 80% of remaining scholarships. 80% is our current baseline rate as LEPs are still in the early stages of developing outreach plans to students interested in becoming Path4Ward eligible.

Participating Students (Combined SY21-22 and SY22-23)

| Race/Ethnicity | |
|---|-----|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 3% |
| Asian | 3% |
| Black or African American | 13% |
| Hispanic or Latinx | 53% |
| White | 27% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0% |
| Two or More | 0% |

| Completion Status | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Completed | 10% |
| Ongoing | 63% |
| Transferred | 0% |
| Incomplete | 20% |
| Other | 7% |

Conclusion

The rapid increase in Path4Ward eligibility indicates successful training and rollout among the largest LEPs. The program is still too new to draw hard conclusions about how the scholarship may change how students plan to approach graduation starting from their first or second years of high school, and still primarily reflects a student population that was already prepared to graduate early rather than making specific plans to use Path4Ward scholarships. However, the number of students already in position to graduate early supports predictions of future growth. In Year 3, CDHE will be able to focus on increasing district engagement with potential early graduates in their first or second years of high school, allowing them to become informed of Path4Ward and other potential graduation options and specifically pursue the program that works best for them.

Recommended Adjustments

CDHE continued to monitor three issues identified in Year 1:

- LEPs continued to express hope that students who completed high school early through an equivalency exam are eligible. Currently, equivalency exams do not meet statutory eligibility requirements, but LEPs believe this population otherwise fits the program goals.
- Participating LEPs shared concerns about security and anonymization of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) data in Year 1. CDHE has managed a workaround for this pilot but this will become resource-intensive with further program growth. Additionally, upcoming changes to the FRL designation via state statute may require adjustments to the Path4Ward eligibility criteria.
- Students continue to be concerned about the speed of remitted funding. Per statute, remitted funding cannot be processed until after the start of classes, while students may need to purchase equipment or books before that date.

Additionally, CDHE has taken note of two additional issues in Year 2:

- The 0.5 FTE allocation has made it difficult to process the onboarding needs of three new LEPs and the 221% growth in eligible student count. CDHE predicts this bottleneck will increase as Path4Ward continues to increase student numbers and add postsecondary programs.
- Rural LEPs reported fewer students than Year 1 and have not been able to increase staff time for Path4Ward program administration as district funding is calculated per eligible student at the end of the school year, which leaves small schools without a stable Path4Ward funding stream.

Increased resources for rural technical support may help these schools effectively implement the program.