



DEAN Receives \$1.8 mil Grant to Expand Impact, Further Linking Education to jobs for Colorado Learners

The Denver Education Attainment Network (DEAN) is taking the next step in its efforts to support the education-to-workforce system in Colorado. The organization recently received a \$1.8 million expansion grant from the Walton Family Foundation as part of its \$20 million in investments to support innovative and collaborative organizations that are transforming the approaches and platforms that help students navigate into meaningful careers that bring them economic security and a sense of fulfillment.

[The Walton Family Foundation's investment](#) will allow DEAN to expand its current footprint and partnerships in and beyond Denver and do two important things to increase the number of Colorado students experiencing career-connected learning:

1. Bring on a new K–12/higher education partnership to expand our community-driven and cross-sector collaboration work, and
2. Begin to frame a statewide policy agenda, informed by its on-the-ground implementation experience, to better support a learner-centered, workforce-aligned education-to-career system.

As an organization, DEAN fulfills a variety of roles in working with and supporting partners: strategic partner, technical assistance provider, funder and connector. To optimize the transition between school and work for the next generation, DEAN operates in the space between institutions and organizations. It coordinates cross-institutional and cross-agency work and ensures that career-connected learning is not just happening in pockets but prioritized and sustained in and across its partner institutions. Its value lies in building the trusted relationships and setting the shared tables required to drive outcomes and propel collaboration forward.

Over the past few years, DEAN has been focused on developing a strong implementation strategy in Denver. Now it is prepared to expand its impact, further linking education to jobs for more Colorado learners, especially those who are and have historically been excluded from high-value career pathways. As the first of many steps to support strategies that work better for all learners and build proof points for this career-connected work, DEAN is establishing a new partnership through an RFP process launching next month.

Colorado has outpaced the majority of the country in post-pandemic recovery. However, economic disparities persist for lower-income Coloradans, and particularly people of color, who have been disproportionately impacted. Creating opportunity for all requires a new approach to educating, cultivating, recruiting and retaining talent. As a result, DEAN's role in ensuring access to and completion of educational experiences that help Colorado's learners gain the skills, knowledge and connections to prepare them for lifelong success is increasingly important.

DEAN looks forward to sharing an update on these exciting and important next steps in 2022.