



# DENVER OPPORTUNITY YOUTH INITIATIVE

The Denver Opportunity Youth Investment Initiative (DOYII) is a group of organizations providing education, career opportunities and support systems to “opportunity youth,” young adults between the ages 16 and 24 that are disconnected from school and/or work. Through DOYII, nonprofit, government and business organizations are partnering to create a pipeline for opportunity youth that begins with securing support services like housing and affordable child care and extends to education and training opportunities, work experience and eventually to job placement. The initiative, led by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, is a collaborative effort across local foundations, public agencies, Denver Public Schools, community-based organizations, business and workforce-oriented organizations and postsecondary institutions, all with different, yet critical, expertise and opportunities to help opportunity youth be more successful.

**WE NEED YOU:** Businesses committed to developing our workforce and matching the right talent to the right job. We won't be successful in this effort without partnership from the business community to hire these youth into their companies and help get them on a path to careers through work experiences, mentorship or training.

The DOYII is investing in pilots or small, quick innovations to provide the necessary tools for educational and career success. At the same time, the DOYII is identifying, developing and supporting strategies to get youth engaged in these education, training and job pilot programs. Progress will be tracked closely so that the DOYII can invest in the most effective strategies and pilot programs.

## **CURRENTLY, THE PILOTS ARE:**

- **GED Plus pilot program** - allows students to earn college credit while they study for their GED. The program serves youth in three Denver schools: Emily Griffith, PUSH Academy and Summit Academy.
- **Workforce navigator** - will provide personalized support to help opportunity youth find the next step in education or work.
- **Workforce intermediary** - dedicated to help connect opportunity youth to the business community and post-employment support through WorkLife Partnership.

As the DOYII enters Phase II, it will continue to build the system of supports for Denver opportunity youth by identifying the gaps in services and system connections while working with businesses to create the opportunities these youth need.

## WHY OPPORTUNITY YOUTH?

There are nearly 10,000 opportunity youths in Denver alone. They represent a huge opportunity to fill our workforce pipeline when they are provided with the right training and support. By 2020, 74 percent of our jobs in Colorado will need a worker with some post-secondary credentials. When you consider that today roughly 45 percent of Coloradans have a two-year degree or higher, it's easy to see that in order for Colorado to maintain its workforce competitive advantage, we need to find solutions to effectively grow our own workforce.

## OUR APPROACH

Maintaining opportunity youth, a population that is economically, socially and geographically marginalized and, as such, is difficult to reach and engage, in a pathway to post-secondary success or a job that provides them with a career ladder and a livable wage is difficult, but possible. With the right support and training, DOYII believes it can make a difference for opportunity youth and provide great talent for the jobs you need to fill.

## WHY PARTNERSHIP IS CRITICAL IN THIS EFFORT

Together, each partner brings to the table an important aspect of completing this work. Guided by proven principles of using data to guide decisions and assess impact, leveraging funding and collaborating across sectors, the DOYII can begin to move the meter for opportunity youth.

### Organizations are engaged in the following ways:

- **Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce** is the backbone of the DOYII and will house the talent pipeline director who will work with businesses to identify internships, job studies and employment opportunities for opportunity youth.
- **Zero Dropouts/ Generation Schools Network** is the navigator, case manager and trainer of opportunity youth. Their role is to match talent to the right educational and work opportunities for each youth.
- **WorkLife Partnership** provides post employment supports to the youth improving retention and decreasing the turn over risk to employers.
- **The Aspen Institute, Rose Community Foundation, Donnell-Kay Foundation, Daniels Fund, Jay and Rose Phillips Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce** provide funding for the initiative.

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Your participation is an investment into the long-term success of not only Denver, but Colorado's economy. We must work together so every youth in Colorado has a chance to give back to our economy. Let's keep Colorado competitive and find a solution to our growing workforce gap.

### You'll work one-on-one with our Talent Pipeline Director Lorena Zimmer to:

- Identify available positions and the necessary skills that are required for a position in your company.
- Identify core competencies that students/youth need prior to an internship or job with you.
- Identify jobs that can be filled immediately vs. jobs that you can tailor for opportunity youth (jobs can be full-time, job shadows, internships or other work experience).
- Identify the youth that have been working with the navigator that are ready for your work opportunities.