



Colorado Lab Newsletter

April 2024

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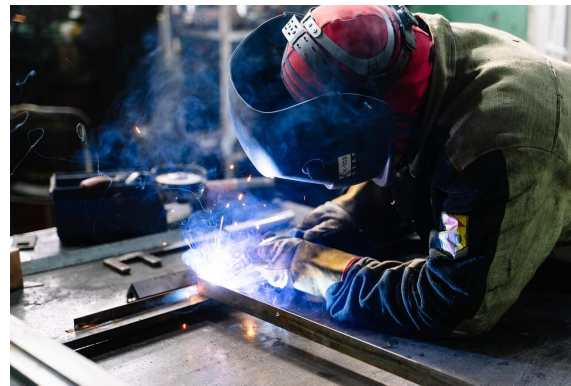
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New Workforce Development Evidence-Building Hub

The Colorado Lab has launched a Workforce Development Evidence-Building Hub. The new Hub is a partnership with the [Colorado Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative](#), the [Colorado Wage Outcomes Result Coalition](#) (Colorado WORC), [Opportunity Now](#), and [WorkRise at the Urban Institute](#). The aim is to learn more about support and training impacts on learner outcomes related to employment, earnings, and equity.

The Hub approach ensures the goals of evaluation work are met, grows the evidence base, and identifies opportunities for ongoing learning, scalability, and sustainability. This model will:

- Leverage the [Linked Information Network of Colorado](#) (LINC) to unlock previously unavailable administrative wage data.
- Coordinate causal evaluations of workforce training programs or cash assistance initiatives that engage learners to expand their skill sets.
- Identify trends in participants' wages pre- and post-participation in training programs.
- Provide strategic visioning and consultation support to identify a long-term durable data solution.
- Build on current momentum, working with champions and stakeholders to activate learnings in policy and program improvements.



A first round of findings will be available later this year, including:

- Participant earnings trajectories for a cohort of six workforce training providers. Findings will be based on labor market data beginning two years before and up to two years after participation in a training program.
- Initial insights into whether cash assistance for learners—such as no-interest loans or stipends—influence financial stability and how they impact employment and earnings.

To learn more about the Workforce Development Evidence-Building Hub, please contact [Dr. Elysia Versen](#).

Evidence-Based Decision Making: Philanthropy Learning Community

The Colorado Lab is working with Philanthropy Colorado and state philanthropic leaders to determine how funders can best support their nonprofit grantee partners in collecting and learning from data. Foundation leaders have been invited to participate in monthly Community of Practice learning sessions through early 2025.

Natalie Portman-Marsh of NPM Consulting, LLC will facilitate the Community of Practice from an [emergent learning perspective](#). She will help the cohort to identify conditions that support grantees in learning from and acting on their data. Throughout the year, the Colorado Lab will document

Evidence-Based Decision Making

(EBDM) is the intersection of the best available research evidence, decision-makers' expertise, and community needs and context. EBDM recognizes that research evidence is not the only contributing factor to policy and budget decisions. Other equally important contextual factors include resourcing, cultural values, community voice, and feasibility of implementation.

results and share promising practices to advance understanding in the broader field.

“We are excited to broaden the engagement of leaders learning about evidence-based decision making,” said Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein, director of the Colorado Lab. “Government and non-governmental partners alike have a unique role to play in creating—and sustaining—a culture where data is used to facilitate improvement rather than just to monitor compliance. When using data, including in its narrative forms, becomes central to the work rather than a periodic event, we get closer to a sustainable system of evidence-based decision making.”

To learn more, please contact [Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein](#).

Plans of Safe Care Pilot: Visit to San Luis Valley



Plans of Safe Care Pilot Team members (Illuminate Colorado, the Colorado Lab, and the Kempe Center) meet with partners from the San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center, the Rural Recovery Network, and Valley-Wide Health providers at Sierra Blanca Medical Center.

Efforts are underway in the San Luis Valley (SLV) to develop a community-led Plans of Safe Care (POSC) infrastructure. The aim is to rapidly connect families with prenatal substance use to trusted resources that help to keep infants safely with their caregiver when possible. As described in our February [newsletter](#), the SLV is piloting this effort to serve local families and build evidence on how to strengthen POSC implementation statewide. The pilot is resourced by the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Welfare.

Earlier this month, the POSC Pilot Team met with SLV community-based providers, health care teams, and child welfare directors. A “reverse open house” approach was used over the two-day site visit with pilot team members traveling across the region to meet with partners in the spaces where they serve families.

“The SLV is a geographically vast area,” said Dr. Courtney Everson, Sr. Project Director for the Colorado Lab. “It is imperative to the pilot’s success that we don’t add burden to already busy providers and community leaders. Our goal is to build capacity and maximize their existing strengths in preventing and treating prenatal substance use.”

“I’m excited to set an example for the state on what’s possible in Plans of Safe Care.”
- SLV Community Partner

During the site visit, local partners remarked how too often the SLV gets the “leftovers” of what the Front Range decides to test and build. This pilot promotes innovation in a rural area that will then be adapted and scaled. Designing

for local context is essential for practices aimed at substance use. In rural areas, there is pervasive stigma on community and professional levels, and many factors that span generations to consider, such as chronic poverty.

Partners were excited to learn that the Colorado Lab’s approach to using data will incorporate learnings during implementation, not just when the pilot is completed. They also appreciated that evidence building will consider strengths, as well as deficits.

“Highlighting the successes of the pilot and of families who do the hard work is really what will make the infrastructure built here in the Valley successful.” - SLV Health Care Provider

With a focus on moving upstream and taking a collaborative approach to prevention, the pilot will help inform policy and practice around what is possible in prenatal substance use and how communities can work together to strengthen families. For more information about the POSC Pilot, please contact [Dr. Courtney Everson](#).

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