Annual Performance Report
State FY21
Annual Performance Report
July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

The Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF) is housed under JFK Partners, the state’s University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, a program of the University of Colorado School of Medicine, which was envisioned by the Colorado Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP). EFAP is a multi-state agency and stakeholder-led collaborative that recommended the development of COEF to the legislature. COEF was made possible, in part, by funding from the IDD (Intellectual and Developmental Disability) cash fund from the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing and the Colorado Legislature generously matched using, in part federal funds, through the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). For more information go to Colorado DVR. The focus of COEF is to implement recommendations put forth by the EFAP.

Cover Story: Tom received supported employment services from Disabled Resource Services, an independent non-profit Center for Independent Living, to work towards his goal of obtaining competitive integrated employment. Tom is now working as a Production Assistant in the Clean Room at Nordson Medical. His main responsibilities include sorting and quality assurance for manufactured parts. Read Tom’s full story here.
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Message from the Director

Dear Colorado Employment First Community,

I am thrilled to be sharing our Annual Performance Report for our second year! I remain honored and humbled by the resiliency of the Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF) team and Employment First community during the difficult times we are facing. The COEF team has rallied together for our community and continues to be guided by a vision and mission committed to competitive integrated employment for all individuals with disabilities.

We are so proud of our community reach with training and technical assistance while continuing to manage the adversity that the pandemic brought. In Year 1, COEF reached 3,077 individuals through statewide and national training and technical assistance and in Year 2, the number of individuals reached has grown to 6,579! COEF is especially proud of the collaborative efforts involved with the launch of Disability Benefits 101, a free employment online resource tool available to all Coloradans, and Inaugural Colorado Employment First Conference!

COEF is leading the way to increase the knowledge and awareness that work IS possible through the use of accessible key strategies and approaches for job seekers with disabilities, families, services providers, and employers, such as Benefits Counseling, Customized Employment, Individual Placement and Support, Person Centered Thinking, Project Search and Technology Solutions. As we know, these strategies and approaches require systems alignment, viable payment structures, community partnerships and quality data to lead to successful employment outcomes and to inform forward progress.

To effectively change and shift mindsets, we must know the priorities of our Employment First community today while continuing to innovate a creative vision forward.
Moving forward, the COEF team remains focused on inspiring individuals with disabilities and their families about employment especially in underserved and rural communities. We look forward to connecting with you in your community very soon!

Thank you to all of Colorado’s Employment First Leaders who bring passion, commitment, and tenacity to the practice of employment being an important social determinant of health that improves quality of life and inclusion. Your collective voice and advocacy are needed more than ever as our systems and practices continue to shift.

Sincerely,

Patricia Henke, MS, CRC
Director
Message from the Employment First Advisory Partnership Tri-Chairs

On behalf of the tri-chairs of the Colorado Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP), we would like to honor and celebrate the 2nd year of work from the Colorado Office of Employment First.

The Mission of the Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF) is to lead Colorado toward equitable employment for all people with disabilities through collaboration, systems innovation, and training excellence. As Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has emerged as a national priority we need to unify our voices and let everyone know that Disability, being the largest minority group, is a foundational part of the DEI movement in employment. People with disabilities, including people with significant disabilities are part of Colorado’s diverse workforce. We are very thankful for the presence and accomplishments of the Colorado Office of Employment First in leading Colorado and the Nation in facilitating systems change, collaboration and education to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

In 2021, the Colorado Office of Employment First successfully:

- Finalized the COEF website employmentfirstcolorado.org
- Brought Disability Benefits 101 (CO DB101) to Colorado. Disability Benefits 101 is a one-stop shop for information, resources, and tools to motivate, guide, and support people with disabilities to pursue employment
- Completed a Rate Structure and Rate Methodology Study to understand if the current rate of pay maintains quality employment providers.
- Successfully launched the Employment First Virtual Conference
- Provided Statewide and National Training and Technical Assistance to 6,579 people!

We hope you will stay connected and join us in powering the Employment First Movement! Together we can create a strong voice for change to ensure all working aged Coloradans with disabilities, including people with significant disabilities, have the opportunity to be included in our diverse workforce.

2021 EFAP Tri-Chairs: Marilee Boylan, Katherine Carol, and Robert Lawhead
Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) FY21

EFAP was enacted by the Employment First legislation, SB16-077, and is a multi-state agency and stakeholder-led collaborative. The collaboration includes representatives of people with disabilities seeking competitive integrated employment, families of people with disabilities, advocates for people with disabilities, employment service providers, and others focused on a cross-disability interest.


EFAP Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) FY21: Caitlin Adams, Kristin Corash, Kelley Land, Cordelia Robinson-Rosenberg, Katie Taliercio, Dr. Shea Tanis, and Josh Winkler.

COEF Formally Named in EFAP Legislation:

Colorado has made great strides in Employment First legislation and initiatives. The Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF) was established in 2019 to help promote Employment First within Colorado and was envisioned by Colorado’s EFAP. COEF was made possible, in part, by funding from the Colorado Legislature and generously matched through DVR at CDLE. In 2021, EFAP was reauthorized through the passage of SB21-095.

This legislation authorized the EFAP to continue with no sunset and mandates and with participation from the following partners: the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), and now also names the Colorado Office of Employment First, JFK Partners within the Department of Pediatrics of the University of Colorado School of Medicine, Anschutz Medical Campus. In addition, SB21-039, Elimination of sub-minimum wage employment was passed.
The Colorado Office of Employment
First Overview

Our Vision:
A culture of inclusive, meaningful, and competitive employment for all people.

Our Mission:
Leading Colorado toward equitable employment reaching all people with disabilities through: Collaboration, Systems Innovation & Training Excellence.

COEF is about changing perspectives on what it means to work, de-mystifying processes, promoting barrier-reducing policies and practices, highlighting innovative technologies, and helping employment providers implement the most effective strategies.

Picture of Milton cheerfully smiling while working.
The COEF Team

The COEF team consists of subject matter experts that are forward thinkers with a diverse educational and experiential background. The COEF team is creating a common expectation & confidence about work and that employment leads to a financially secure, healthy and fulfilled life for all people with disabilities and their families. The COEF team is convening decision makers to improve policies to promote Employment First initiatives, and providing education and awareness, to elevate the delivery of effective employment services across Colorado.

Row 1: Pictured from left to right:
Patricia Henke, MS, CRC Director; Tiffany D. Cron, PhD, Curriculum Developer/Trainer, Brian Dean, MA, CRC, Program Developer/Trainer, and Sandra Friedman, MD, MPH/MSPH, CO-Principal Investigator.

Row 2: Pictured from left to right:
Melanie Honsbruch, CPWIC, Curriculum Developer/Trainer; Teresa Nguyen, MPH, WIP-C, Curriculum Developer/Trainer; and Corry Robinson-Rosenberg, PhD, RN, Principal Investigator.
Row 3: Pictured from left to right:
Deirdre Sage, MSW, Curriculum Developer/Trainer; Joleen Schaake, MBA, Associate Director of Finance and Accounting; Jennifer Stewart, MPP, Education Liaison Contractor; and Aryn Taylor, PhD, CRC, Grant Writer/Analyst/Evaluator.

The COEF team was fortunate to have an intern this year who was Katherine Neault. Katherine was essential to the COEF team in helping to support the virtual activities of webinars, meetings, and communities of practices during her first internship. Katherine’s second internship was expanded into assisting in all things communications from graphic design to learning and assisting with MailChimp and social media announcements, as well as public speaking opportunities within webinars.

Katherine, thank you for all of your hard work!
Key Accomplishments

The COEF team had a busy FY21 with several notable accomplishments that helped elevate and support the work of Employment First within Colorado as well as nationally.

- Finalized COEF brand, marketing materials, and website development in both English and Spanish.
- Developed, presented and published the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) SSI Youth Project paper, “Improving Youth SSI Recipients’ Employment Outcomes through an Integrated Treatment Team Intervention in a Health Care Setting.”
- Presented at notable conferences and events including:
  - National APSE Conference and Post Conference events
  - Individual Placement & Support Conference
  - Step Into Tomorrow Youth Employment Summit
  - Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation conference
- Elevated the training experience by purchasing and using our new learning management system called YesLMS that was built with universal design for accessibility to accommodate individual learning differences.
- Hosted Colorado’s first Employment First conference virtually.
- Supported the collaborative efforts on bringing Disability Benefits 101 to Colorado, launching in early FY22.
- Collaborated with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition and the Colorado Department of Education on the development and implementation of Sequencing of Services for students and youth with disabilities.
- Established Colorado’s Employment First Youth Advisory Council.
- Cultivated partnerships to help launch new Project Search sites within Colorado.
- Was a key partner in the development of the “Guide for How to Get Nationally Certified in Benefits Counseling.”
- Developed in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, English and Spanish youth and family brochures that focus on Employment First.
Professional Development & Engagement

As part of an effort to enhance the skills and knowledge within the COEF team, staff attended a myriad of training opportunities in FY21.

Professional Development & Engagement highlights include:

- Assistive Technology Training & Demonstrations
- Benefits and Work Incentive Practitioner Certification
- Discovery and Customized Job Development Training & Certification
- Digital Literacy Training
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training
  - Examine Your Wiring – Implicit Bias
  - True Colors
  - Words Matter
- Emerging Leaders in Employment First Training
- Instructional Design Curriculum Development and Training
- IPS Leadership Training
- Administration on Disabilities (AoD) Grantee Representative Work Group
- Board Members for Colorado Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
- Member with the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE)
- Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP)
- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)
Curriculum Development & Training

Curriculum Development:

The team of curriculum developers for FY21 focused efforts on building a Colorado based basic supported employment curriculum. The legislation of SB18-145 requires all providers of supported employment services for persons with disabilities to obtain a nationally recognized supported employment training certificate or earn a nationally recognized supported employment certification relating to supported employment services.

The year-long effort included gathering content to build a curriculum that aligns with the 39 ACRE (Association for Community Rehabilitation Educators) competencies. The curriculum was in COEF’s internal quality review process at the end of FY21 to then be submitted for ACRE review early in FY22.

Additionally, near the end of FY21, COEF entered into the initial phases of a partnership with the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council (CDDC) and JFK Partners to develop a statewide training curriculum to educate youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their parents and/or guardians about Employment First. There will be two curricula developed that includes information about the possibilities, processes, potential services, systems navigation, and strategies for securing competitive integrated employment in Colorado. Development on these new curricula will begin in FY22.

Training:

Training efforts within FY21 continued to build upon the training that launched in FY20 and centered around the following topic areas:

- Benefits Counseling
- Customized Employment
  - Discovery
  - Customized Job Development
  - Systematic Instruction
- Employment First
  - 2021 Building Leaders in Employment First Conference
- Individual Placement & Support (IPS)
- Youth & Families
**Training & Educational Reach**

The COEF Statement of Work established the goal for reaching 100 people per session for 10 training sessions with diverse audience members to include people with disabilities and their families, services providers and educators. Interested learners and sought-after training topics helped COEF reach 300% more participants. In FY20, COEF had a total of 3077 participants and we were able to more than double this number for FY21 to 6579 participants.

**Total of Participants Reached (Year Two) = 6579**
- 13% (863) Employment First
- 18% (1176) Benefits Counseling
- 22% (1420) Customized Employment
- 20% (1352) Individual Placement & Support
- 27% (1768) Youth and Family

*Figure 1: FY21 Percentage of participants by topic.*
Employment First and Conference

Conference Lead: Tiffany Cron, PhD

Employment First is an effort adopted by states to change systems and create a reality of meaningful work for all people with disabilities, including people with significant and complex disabilities. Helping Coloradans understand Employment First philosophy and begin to understand the practices is a primary function of COEF.

In FY21, 863 people across Colorado participated in Employment First related educational opportunities. Participants gained an understanding of what it means to be competitively employed in an integrated setting.

A highlight for FY21 was in the planning and successful delivery of the virtual Building Leaders in Employment First Conference.

Highlights from Colorado’s first Employment First conference included:

- **134 conference attendees**, 22% were self-advocates or family members
- **21 session presentations** aligning within three conference tracks of: Future of Work; Advocacy, Empowerment and Leadership; and Innovative Practices
- As well as **2 Keynote addresses** from author and international disability rights advocate Judith Heumann; and disability rights leader Henry Claypool
- **Presented six conference awards** to nine individuals/groups:
  - Excellence in Benefits Counseling Award to Shantelle Rockman
  - Advocacy, Empowerment and Innovation Award to Jim Panzer
  - Breaking Barriers and Pursuing Dreams Scholarship to Eric Niesent
  - Leadership in Colorado Employment First Award to Bob Lawhead, Katherine Carol, and Marilee Boylan
  - Excellence in Individual Placement Support and/or Customized Employment Award to Margaret Sanderson
  - Building Leaders in Employment First Employer Award (Large & Small Employer) to UC Health: Stephanie Crookston; and Pizza Hut: Mark Vigil
- **Offered CEUs** for all conference sessions and hosted conference content on our new learning management system, YesLMS
Benefits Counseling

Program Lead: Melanie Honsbruch, CPWIC

Benefits Counseling is a service that helps individuals with disabilities and their families understand how employment and other life decisions will impact their benefits.

In FY21, a central highlight of the work within benefits counseling was in leading the project plan to bring the web-based program Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) to Colorado. Several project meetings occurred with subject matter experts within Colorado and with national subject matter experts. The year-long effort ended with a fully built Colorado version of DB101, in English and Spanish, that included two local Coloradans with disabilities represented on the homepage. FY21 ended with planning and preparation for the release and launch of Colorado’s Newest Employment Resource: Colorado DB101 set for August 1, 2021. COEF acknowledges and appreciates that this great effort would not have been possible without the countless job seekers, families, advocates, providers, organizations, and state agencies that contributed hours of support and expertise.

In FY21, several statewide webinars and tailored training sessions were delivered about Benefits Counseling to a total of 1176 participants across Colorado.

Additional highlights of FY21 included:

- Hosted monthly Benefits Collaborative meetings for all certified benefits counselors in Colorado
- Regarding the Benefits Collaborative, one member wrote,
  "Thank you for all you do. Since you came on board there is much more support. Thank you."
- Presented as a subject matter expert during the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Roundtables hosted by the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Engaged in collaborative partnerships in developing:
  o Youth Brochure on Benefits Counseling
  o Guide on How to Obtain Benefits Counseling Certification in Colorado
**Customized Employment**

Program Lead: Brian Dean, MA, CRC

Customized employment is a cross-disability, evidence-informed practice resulting in positive competitive integrated employment outcomes. COEF, in partnership with Marc Gold & Associates and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), offered customized employment training, mentorship, and certification in Discovery, Job Development, and Systematic Instruction.

**In FY21 a total of 1243 people across Colorado attended educational opportunities surrounding customized employment.**

Additionally, in FY21 a total of 177 people across Colorado attended training surrounding customized employment. Certified providers are eligible for enhanced rates when providing services to DVR clients.

One Customized Employment training participant said this about the training:

> “It is a great training to help people move away from a lens that is disability focused to a lens that highlights people’s abilities and how they can contribute meaningfully in the workforce.”

**Discovery Services:**
- 68 individuals completed Discovery Services Training
- 25 individuals are pursuing or have completed certification
- *Cumulatively, 126 individuals have completed training and 41 are pursuing or have completed certification since COEF’s inception.*

**Customized Job Development:**
- 68 individuals completed Customized Job Development Training
- 24 individuals are pursuing or have completed certification

**Systematic Instruction:**
- 41 individuals completed Systematic Instruction
- 11 individuals are interested in certification (on hold due to COVID)

A highlight from FY21 included the development and branding of Colorado specific Customized Employment materials for various stakeholders from the collaborative work done with DVR, HCPF, and other community partners.
**Individual Placement and Support**

**Program Lead: Deirdre Sage, MSW, LSW**

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model is an evidence-based, international, supported employment approach for people with serious mental illness and its application is expanding throughout Colorado.

**In FY21 a total of 1312 people across Colorado attended educational opportunities surrounding Individual Placement and Support.**

Additionally, in FY21, three cohorts of IPS Employment Specialist training were completed that resulted in 42 nationally recognized certificates. **Cumulatively, 92 individuals have completed training since COEF’s inception.**

One IPS training participant had this to say about the training:

> “I thought it was a perfect blend on presentations, videos, group chats, slideshows and lessons. I learned so much knowledge on IPS and also many tips to help me out on my future outings with job development. It was engaging and a safe place to share my thoughts, ideas and opinions.”

Colorado was selected to join five other states to collaborate with National IPS Employment Center, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to provide technical assistance to states wanting to implement IPS.

**Additional highlights of FY21 included:**

- Collaborated in five of six IPS virtual quality improvement reviews
- Collaborated on the VOICE project to develop an infographic and briefing book
- Facilitated ongoing IPS Learning & Practice Community sessions
- Collaborated in the planning and facilitation of the 6th Annual Colorado IPS Conference and presented at two breakout sessions and one keynote
- Collaborated on an IPS video to share at the CSAVR Conference
Youth and Families

Program Leads: Teresa Nguyen, MPH, WIP-C and Jennifer Stewart, MPP

The efforts throughout FY21 focused on a strong emphasis that the time to begin exploring and recognizing the power of competitive work is when individuals with disabilities are young.

In FY21 a total of 1768 people across Colorado attended Employment First educational opportunities focused on Youth and Families.

Additional highlights of FY21 included:

- Sequencing of Services for students and youth with disabilities
  - Collaborated with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition and the Colorado Department of Education on the development and implementation of Sequencing of Services for students and youth with disabilities
  - Collaborated on a virtual version of the sequencing of services tool and [developed a website to host the sequencing of services framework](#)

- Established Colorado’s Employment First Youth Advisory Council

- Employment First Integration with Healthcare
  - Partnerships developed among medical professionals with Children’s Hospital Transition Teams
  - Provided technical assistance to families and youth referred from Children's Hospital to learn about Employment First

- Completed collaborative work with CDE and DVR on youth and family employment first focused brochures available in English and Spanish currently available on the [COEF website](#)
**Technical Assistance and Capacity Building**

COEF provided technical assistance (TA) to 262 participants both as individuals or amongst groups on Employment First in four categories: Individual, organizational, statewide, and national technical assistance.

While technical assistance topics are very broad, a few of the highlights from FY21 include:

- **Individual TA (N=103):** people with disabilities and family members seeking employment advice, as well as individual service providers
- **Organizational TA (N=66):** service provider organizations looking for employment first training and TA
- **Statewide TA (N=82):** participating in the I/DD roundtables hosted by HCPF and DVR, and the IPS conference planning and TA
- **National TA (N=11):** partnering with National APSE on conference planning and TA, and National Emerging Leaders community of practice

*Figure 2: CEOF FY21 Technical Assistance by Type (N=262)*
Communications & Outreach

Throughout FY21, increased communications and outreach across Colorado has been central to increasing awareness about Employment First in Colorado. A strong communications plan was developed that included efforts around finalizing the COEF website in both English and Spanish, expanding the listserv for announcements through Mailchimp and boosting our social media presence.

Highlights for COEF communication efforts in FY21 include:

- Coordinated communication announcements for training, webinars, events, news, and sharing of resources to our listserv using Mailchimp and posting to our redesigned public website calendar
- A total of 85 Mailchimp announcements were developed and sent
  - Our listserv grew from 945 in FY20 to 1047 in FY21
- Expanded our communications outreach by developing a COEF YouTube channel, Twitter account, and LinkedIn account
- Innovated our communications through animated video commercials using Doodly to announce our conference and the roll out of CO DB101
  - Building Leaders in Employment First video commercial
- Innovated our communications strategy as it related to our conference and CO DB101 by developing media kits that included a lot of varied content and graphic designs
- Innovated communications through the use of QR codes for printed materials in place of hyperlinks to be more accessible
- A total of 184 social media messages celebrating Employment First and disability awareness were built and sent out through various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter
Webinars

The COEF sought out opportunities to provide education surrounding Employment First and increase awareness that employment is possible. This year’s webinar series would not have been possible without the collaboration and support from subject matter experts, self-advocates, families, and Employment First leaders locally and from across the nation.

Webinar topics from FY21 included:

- Assistive Technology 101
- Supporting Young Adults with Disabilities to Achieve Employment
- Celebrating 30 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Embracing Disruptive Technology and the Future of Employment
- Disability Benefits 101: Colorado’s Tool for the Exploration of Employment, Healthcare Coverage and Benefits
- COEF Stakeholder Engagement Forum: Technology Solutions
- Talking About Employment During the IEP Process
- COEF Conference Listening Session
- An Overview: Customized Employment Training and Certification
- Stakeholder Engagement Forum: Employer Engagement
- Benefits Counseling: Unlock Your Potential
- Emerging Leaders in Employment First
- Thriving in a Virtual World
- Listening Session: Assistive Technology and Employment
- Path to Employment: Tips for Families
- Self-Care from a Person-Centered Lens

Additionally, in FY21 COEF partnered with the University of Colorado’s Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE) on assistive technology resources and demonstrations for employment. A series of weekly webinars were provided to demonstrate various high- and low-tech assistive devices that can be used to support enhanced employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
Coordination & Program Evaluation

COEF engaged in significant program evaluation activities within FY21 to achieve an Employment First vision within Colorado.

Highlights of the FY21 Coordination & Program Evaluation activities include:

- Engaged in technical assistance to state agencies presenting to EFAP
- Engaged in ongoing partnership on the EFAP Strategic Recommendations refresh committee
- Collaborated on the Rate Structure and Rate Methodology project with national and local subject matter experts
- Developed, in partnership with DVR, WINTAC and MG&A, a program evaluation for Customized Employment
- Engaged in COEF data workgroup to evaluate targeted data measures, explore data sharing agreements, and review Employment First data collection methods
  - Partnered with Indiana University UCEDD to explore their Day and Employment Services Outcome Survey (DESOS)
  - COEF will procure DESOS for Colorado with an anticipated data collection to begin late in FY22
- Developed internal data tracking and evaluation plan for all webinars, training, and use of DB101
Financial Information

During FY21, COEF successfully allocated and spent 98% of their budget to close out the fiscal year. This was accomplished by developing many partnerships and managing 38 contracts.

Figure 3: Percent of FY21 budget spent.

FY21 Budget Breakdown:

- The FY21 Budget was comprised of the FY20 Carry Forward and the FY21 Appropriation: $1,995,234.00
- FY21 total expenditures: $1,945,663.44
- Remaining unspent balance: $49,570.56
- Percent Spent of FY21 budget: 97.52%

Additionally, COEF collaborated with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to increase capacity for Customized Employment in Colorado. In FY21, we developed an Interagency Agreement for use of Customized Employment Expansion funds appropriated by the legislature. This Interagency Agreement was finalized late October 2020 and was effective October 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. COEF allocated and spent 38.38% of this budget due to a late start and being piloted during the middle of the COVID-19 shutdown and staffing crisis.
Sustainability Plan

COEF has been operational for 2 years and was formed 3 months into an incredibly rare and disruptive pandemic. Systems Innovation and culture shifts require time, and while great progress has been made, COEF is only getting started with building capacity and shifting mindsets across Colorado.

Colorado’s workforce has changed due the pandemic and many Coloradans are changing professions -- a new workforce for Employment Services Providers is being developed to maintain Employment First momentum in Colorado.

In FY21, COEF developed a foundation to provide funding opportunities to support COEF sustainability.

- COEF developed a foundation account with the University of Colorado (CU) as a way for others to support the work of COEF. [COEF Program Support Fund](#)

Additional highlights from FY21 for COEF sustainability include:

- Colorado State University / COEF Grant Collaboration
- Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CCTSI) Grant Concept Development / submitted
- In the process of submitting a federal grant that is pending with an award decision coming in FY22
- Engaged in strategic discussions to approach EFAP state agency partners & legislature for continued funding
- Explored options for program income including the Employment First conference and charging for training
- Partnering with HCPF on an interagency agreement for benefits counseling services
Partnership

The momentum from year one into year two for COEF would not exist without collaborative support from state agency partners, service provider partners, stakeholder and community partners, including our career seeking partners and their families. COEF had a very busy second year and there is more work to be done. Through these collaborations, the office has developed business operations, has set targets and benchmarks, has focused on the policies and processes to evaluate and update progress, and most importantly, has prioritized training to achieve competitive integrated employment for all Coloradans.

Intentional, strategic partnerships and collaborations have led us to this moment in time. Continuing this theme in practice through growing current relationships and building new relationships is essential to the Employment First road forward. With the shared vision of Employment First, moving the needle is not only possible, it is certain.

Thank you for spending time reflecting on the second year of the Colorado Office of Employment First, and we invite you to look for ways to become involved and engaged in the mission.

CONNECT WITH US

Visit our website: [https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/](https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/)
Scan our QR code below to Subscribe to our Listserve for Communications

Check out COEF Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter: @coeftalk

Work connects us, provides purpose, supports well-being, and can transform lives.