

FACT SHEET

Denver Para-To-Teacher Pipeline Project

Fall 2022

Amid a severe teacher shortage in Colorado and nationwide, the Denver Para-to-Teacher Pipeline Project scales a proven strategy to build a bigger and more diverse teacher pipeline and reduce turnover in Denver-area schools. Launched by a coalition of impact investors, service providers, workforce experts, and school districts, the project expands the Center for Urban Education at the University of Northern Colorado—a high-quality teacher training program that offers local paraprofessionals a pathway to become full-time teachers. The project uses outcomes financing to support strong outcomes for CUE graduates and their students, measured by rates of teacher placement, diversity, and retention.

EXPANDING A PROVEN TEACHER TRAINING STRATEGY

Denver-area schools employ thousands of paraprofessionals—unlicensed teaching aides and classroom assistants—that often have extensive classroom experience and local roots but earn roughly half of a full-time teacher's salary. The Center for Urban Education at the University of Northern Colorado (CUE) has created a pathway for these individuals to simultaneously earn a bachelor's degree and teaching license and advance into full-time teaching positions in their community. Trendlines, a Denver-based workforce development accelerator, is helping CUE sustainably expand its operations by providing strategic support around recruitment, data systems, and performance management.

CUE's program has a unique, hybrid model that blends online and in-person bachelor's level coursework with practical skill building. Participants benefit from more than 3,000 hours of paid on-the-job training, working half-days as paraprofessionals to provide tutoring, small-group instruction, and whole-group lessons. This combination of academic instruction and real-world experience prepares graduates to add value from day one once placed as full-time teachers.

By actively recruiting a wide range of candidates, CUE is building a diverse pipeline of qualified, full-time educators. 70% of program participants are people of color and 90% are first-generation college students. Additionally, CUE recognizes the hurdles that many non-traditional candidates may face as they work towards their degree and certification. The program has built a series of high-touch, wraparound supports—including peer mentorship, academic counseling, and emergency financial aid—to help ensure participants graduate. The approach is working—**CUE's five-year graduation rate is 93%.**

DRIVING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Urgent challenges like Colorado's teacher shortage demand interventions that work—when they don't, children, families, and taxpayers all lose out. Outcomes financing is a proven tool to pilot or expand social programs that deliver real, measurable benefits to communities. By aligning spending with results, outcomes financing allows service providers to scale their programs sustainably without compromising impact, all while enhancing accountability, transparency, and collaboration across the public and private sectors.

In practice, what this approach means is that school districts will fund CUE's expansion by paying for teacher placement and retention. Since CUE has agreed to be paid based on future outcomes, they still require dollars today to grow their program. The Community Outcomes Fund, in partnership with BDT*catalyst*, bridges this gap by providing outcomes financing—an upfront, flexible loan that supports program operation and management

BUILDING A DIVERSE TEACHER PIPELINE IN DENVER AND BEYOND



~200 new teachers (over 5 years) who benefit from a salary increase of up to 50%



Diversified educator workforce that supports better student outcomes, particularly for students of color



CUE pivots to a sustainable model, which can serve as a national strategy for workforce development programs

PROJECT PARTNERS



The Center for Urban Education at University of Northern Colorado (CUE) is the project's service provider, delivering a high-quality teacher training program to paraprofessionals interested in earning their bachelor's degree and teaching license. CUE serves students of all ages and ethnicities in the Denver area interested in becoming either an early childhood, elementary, or special educator. Students come from throughout the Denver metropolitan area. All CUE students are focusing on teacher preparation and share their experiences and knowledge in classes and in cohort groups with mentors.



Trendlines is serving as the project's performance manager and fiscal agent. Trendlines is a Denver-based accelerator and technical assistance provider that offers supports to organizations on how to design, operate, scale, and sustain high-quality skills, education, and employment programming. Through its accelerator, Trendlines selects promising workforce programs to join its portfolio, invests in their expansion, and increases their impact with the goal of strengthening the workforce ecosystem.



Colorado Nonprofit Development Center (CNDC) is sponsoring the project through a recourse guaranty. CNDC is the only nonprofit in the Denver region designed specifically to provide comprehensive fiscal sponsorship to charitable organizations under the umbrella of their 501©(3). CNDC offers services designed to meet the specific needs of charitable organizations, including organizational management, risk management, back-office administration, training, compliance, legal support and comprehensive fiscal sponsorship.



The Community Outcomes Fund at Maycomb Capital is the project's impact investor, providing outcomes financing in the form of a working capital loan to fund service delivery. The Community Outcomes Fund seeks to transform the way that government funds services for low-income families by enabling government and its partners to align spending with outcomes rather than process and compliance. It is the largest pool of dedicated capital for outcomes financing in the United States, pioneering a new model to accelerate the market and help scale outcomes financing investments across the country.



BDTcatalyst serves as the project's top-loss guarantor. BDTcatalyst makes flexible investments in high-impact, place-based companies and organizations with the goals of unlocking capital and driving transformational change. This initiative is funded by the BDT Pledge: BDT's commitment to re-investing a portion of its funds' returns in social impact initiatives.



Denver-area school districts are funding CUE's expansion by paying teacher placement and retention fees.