The Collaborative Nature of Colorado's Workforce Development Programs

Prepared by Colorado Workforce Development Council Director Stephanie Steffens

Coordinated and convened by the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), a powerful collaboration of state agencies, local partners, and industry – led by business – are working to ensure that Colorado's workforce development, education, and training efforts are aligned to meet the needs of Colorado's economy.

The workforce development work we are doing in Colorado is working, and we are determined to continue this critical work in ensuring that Colorado has one of the best talent development systems in the country. Colorado is among the nation's leaders in many economic, education, and workforce-related indicators. Our economy consistently outperforms the national economy in job growth, retail sales, and entrepreneurial activity. Our workforce is among the most educated, with almost 50 percent of the adult population having a post-secondary degree, and our workforce system is leading the way with innovative approaches to help workers not only get jobs, but enter careers. Contributing to this performance is the recognition among Colorado's state leaders that alignment of the state's education, workforce and economic development systems is essential to ensuring that we are able to meet our workforce needs and support the growth of the economy.

Colorado has made great progress with its alignment efforts. With the CWDC at the lead, state agencies overseeing education, workforce, and economic development maintain an unprecedented level of communication, data-sharing and collaboration. A willingness to explore innovative solutions, proactively expand proven practices, and share data has strengthened partnerships and trust across state-level organizations. For example, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) have made great strides in ensuring that secondary students are prepared to enter post-secondary education, which began with the passage of the 2008 Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids. Similarly, a new data-sharing agreement between the CDHE and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) allows Colorado to track college graduates into the workforce, providing insights to how well our post-secondary system is meeting the state's workforce needs, and simultaneously how well our education system is preparing students for career success. The Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) has established the alignment of systems to "Educate and Train the Workforce of the Future" as one of six core objectives in the economic development plan for Colorado. By leveraging the collaboration of agencies through the CWDC, the implementation of this objective is "owned" by all system partners.

Despite Colorado's strong performance and its progress in aligning state-level efforts, challenges remain. The ethnic education gap between white and Hispanic students in Colorado is the second largest in the country. This gap is made more alarming by forecasts showing that by 2035, people of color will comprise almost one third of the state's population, with the fastest growing demographic being Hispanics. Today, only nine percent of Hispanic males in high school go onto higher education and only eight percent of Hispanics in the state have a bachelor's degree.

According to the National Governors Association's (NGA's) report *America Works: Educating and Training for Tomorrow's Jobs*, 50 percent of Colorado's jobs in 2030 will require at least an associate's degree. This does not include the vast number of jobs that require at least some post-secondary training. Additionally this report demonstrates that only 44 percent of Coloradan's age 25 and over currently hold at least an associate's degree.

In short, while Colorado has been able to attract highly-educated workers to meet its workforce needs, the state needs to do better to prepare our own students for post-secondary success. This situation, known as the "Colorado Paradox," continues to confound the state's policy leaders. As more and more jobs require post-secondary education, the state must find a way to better meet its workforce needs. We must continue to maintain Colorado's reputation as a great place to live, work and play, thereby attracting talent while also improving our ability to educate and train Coloradans for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

An Opportunity

Colorado recently applied for and was awarded participation in an NGA Policy Academy on "Aligning Education and Training to Meet the Needs of the Economy." This Policy Academy offers technical assistance and policy guidance that will enable Colorado's leaders to address the Paradox and create a talent development system that will serve the state's needs. We believe the Academy will leverage the great work Colorado is already doing to help Colorado's continued improvement in the following areas:

Vision. We recognize that the state must first have a unified vision. The guiding documents informing this vision are in place in Colorado: the Colorado Blueprint, the state's economic development plan, and Colorado Competes – the state's Master Plan for higher education. Together, these documents lay the path for improving the economic vitality of the state and for developing a system that will continue to prepare all Coloradans to succeed in the economy. A myriad other documents inform and guide the many programs, policies and initiatives. Colorado seeks to distill the key components of these documents into a single statewide talent agenda.

Data. Colorado's state agencies are making great strides in connecting student data from K-12 through completion of post-secondary education and into the workforce, enabling education and policymakers to address policy questions and gauge the effectiveness of programs and initiatives designed to improve student success. However, the data and the data agreements are limited and do not reach all students, employees and employers. We also suffer from the all-too-common "data rich, information poor" circumstance, and need a stronger infrastructure to turn data into useful information.

Partnerships. The CWDC is a state-level cross-sector partnership charged with the alignment of education, workforce and economic development to meet industry needs. CWDC is comprised of over 30 business leaders from every region and key industries of the state along with leadership from all agencies that impact economic development; education and workforce development; the community college system; legislators; local government; and labor representatives. Recent Colorado legislation (Senate Bill 14-0205: Talent Pipeline Working Group) requires the CWDC to utilize sector partnerships to advise the development

of career pathway programs for critical occupations in key industries and to ensure the coordination of education and workforce initiatives to develop a strong talent pipeline for Colorado. CWDC's commitment to collaboration through regional and statewide industry led public-private partnerships has earned trust across partners and national recognition. CWDC's state level partnerships have successes, yet we still have the challenge of institutionalizing these partnerships beyond individual relationships into the fabric of Colorado's administration to ensure that the framework is strong enough to withstand leadership changes. Additionally, local partnerships in Colorado are more driven by local needs, strong local leadership, and a shared desire to work together in ad hoc ways to advance immediate needs. This bottom-up approach is core to what makes Colorado uniquely strong. However, this means that formalizing partnerships through modifying and codifying new uses of resources and formalizing shared goals is a challenge.

Resources and incentives. Colorado is strong because of its locally-based infrastructure. We are successful when we embrace this reality and focus on bottom-up approaches that are supported by leadership at the highest levels of the state. This approach both requires and leads to the elements described above – a unified vision supported by data and implemented through strong partnerships. These three elements in turn enable resources and incentives to become tools to empower further action. With further progress on a unified vision, shared data and strong partnerships, Colorado will be positioned to reassess how funding streams and incentives can be realigned to improve the talent development system.

We believe that Colorado is at a tipping point in terms of aligning our education, workforce and economic development systems to meet the needs of Colorado's economy today and in the future. We can continue on our current path, with state agencies working together but pursuing their individual goals; but we have chosen to **create a unified talent development system that will meet our workforce needs, support the growth of the economy, and once and for all address the Colorado Paradox**. We will utilize resources such as the Colorado Talent Pipeline, the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (House Bill 14-1384), and other relative legislation and policy along with the NGA support to create a Talent Development Dashboard and manage the processes required to develop it.

Creating the Colorado Talent Development System and Dashboard

Colorado has excelled in many areas identified above, and yet as much as we have aligned across agencies and sectors, we are still working to weave these new groups into an efficient network of informed collaboration. We realize that we are missing a singular tool that measures effectiveness, eliminates inefficiencies, and assists us with guiding resources and incentives in our education and training systems.

A focus point to continue to align efforts is the work required to create a Talent Development Dashboard that accurately reflects progress made toward meeting the economy's need for an appropriately skilled workforce, and the effectiveness of Colorado's Talent Development System to ensure that Coloradans have the education and training needed to compete for today and tomorrow's jobs.

The very act of creating this dashboard will assist us with identification of shared goals, unifying metrics, and tools for tracking progress on various fronts. Furthermore, the development of this dashboard

will hold us all accountable to a strategic direction toward the creation of a unified talent development system that addresses the Colorado Paradox.

To provide additional details please see the attached documents:

- CWDC Fact Sheet (pages 5-6)
- Developing Colorado's Talent (page 7)
- Creating Colorado's Workforce of the Future (page 8)

Colorado Workforce Development Council

Vision:

Every Colorado business has access to a skilled workforce and every Coloradan has access to meaningful employment, resulting in statewide economic vitality.

Mission:

To create and sustain a business-led Colorado talent system that appropriately integrates the work of economic development, education, training and workforce development to meet the needs of businesses, students and job -seekers.

"This Council shall serve as the convening body for the state of Colorado that represents the interests of all communities relevant to economic vitality, education, and training, in support of and focused on business.

The Council is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the state workforce system…will direct collaborative efforts, led by business representatives appointed from across the state of Colorado, in cooperation with the workforce system, education, and economic development groups, in an effort to create a rich environment for economic prosperity..." **- CWDC Bylaws**

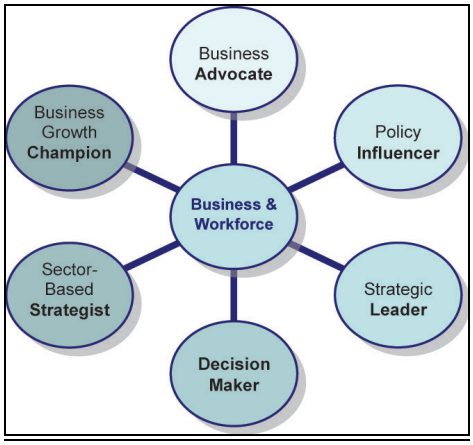
The Role of the Colorado Workforce Development Council

- Responsible for the continuous improvement of the workforce system, oversight of Workforce Investment Act funds, and ensuring a statewide strategic vision created from the bottom up through Council members and local partners.
- Act as a neutral forum for determining the cost of potential regulation and policy to businesses and its impact on the ability of businesses to create jobs.
- Focus on business needs to create a talent-based, skilled workforce through the alignment of initiatives in education, workforce and economic development.
- Leverage partnerships to identify needs and gaps and create sustainable solutions and their funding.

Council Members

- The Governor, two state Senators, two state Representatives, two local elected officials and two labor union representatives.
- The Executive Directors of the following Colorado state agencies):
  - By executive order: Department of Labor & Employment, Office of Economic Development & International Trade, Department of Higher Education, Department of Education, Department of Local Affairs, Department of Agriculture, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, Colorado Energy Office
  - By invitation: Department of Transportation
- President of the Colorado Community College System
- A representative of Workforce Directors
- Majority are business representatives:
  - Small to large businesses.
  - Owner/operators, human resource professionals, CEO's, etc.
  - Geographically diverse, representing all regions.
  - Representative of all primary industries of Colorado.
  - Nominated by local communities and their industries.
  - Wide range of experience with the workforce system, local economic development and education.

Business Council Member Qualities/Responsibilities



Council members possess leadership skills and capabilities for utilization in CWDC work based upon their demonstrated ability to establish thought leadership, influence others, collaborate with others, build partnerships, and courageously confront tough issues that need to be resolved to move Colorado forward.

The CWDC Director, Stephanie Steffens, and her staff will work in an efficient and professional manner to support the Council and ensure the Council operates strategically and effectively. The Director and staff will provide timely information, effective communication, and factual support for all roles of the Council members.

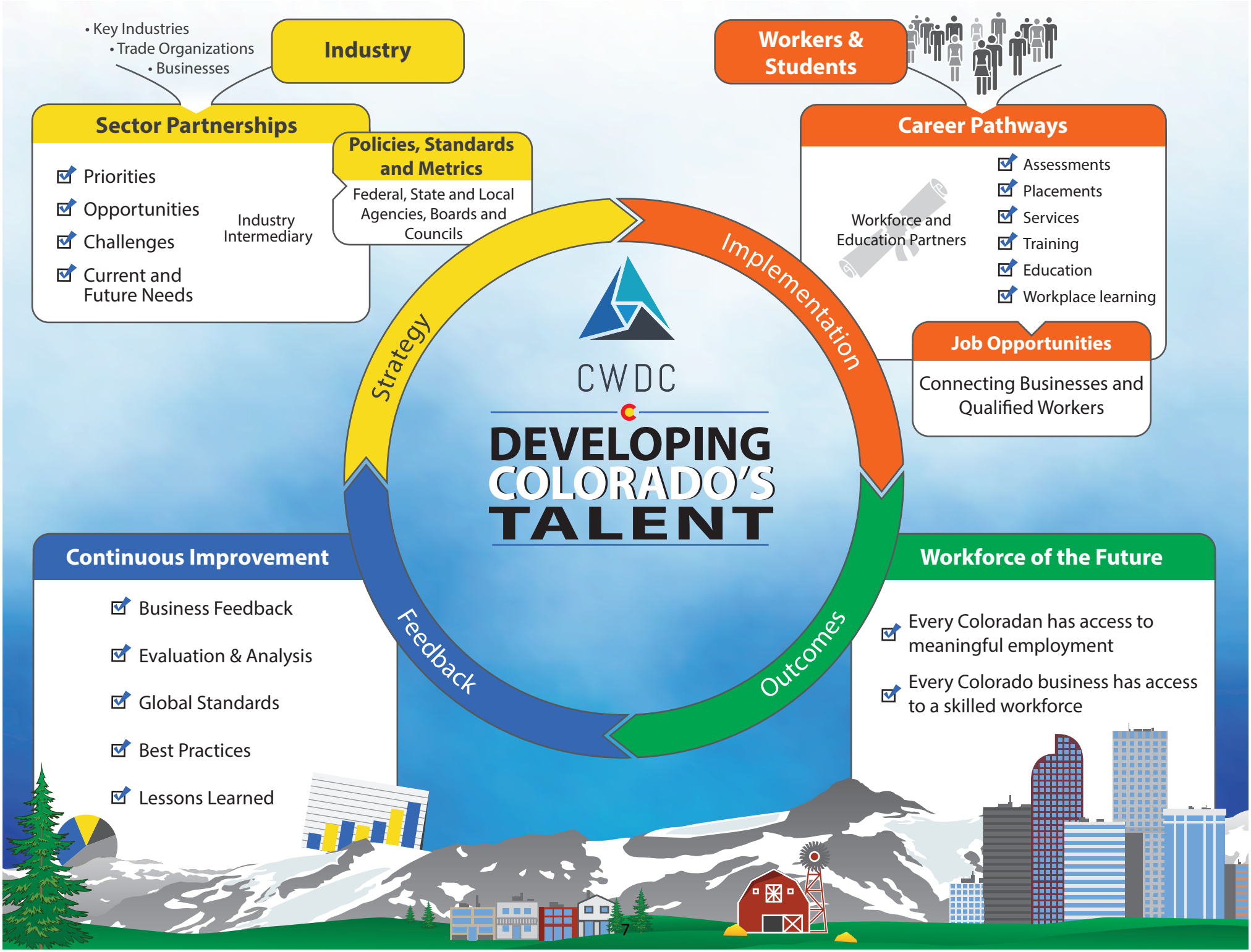
Council Members Roles/"Job Description"

- Inform and educate policy writers and elected government officials about negative impacts on business, as well as supporting policy and legislation that will sustain a Colorado business-friendly environment.
- Influence more flexibility in use of government monies to allow stakeholders more use of innovative solutions.
- Act as the voice of local communities and business to state and federal officials to ensure long-term commitment to business-focused goals and initiatives.
- Review, adapt, and utilize a transparent decision-making process for distribution of funding that will result in the best "Return on Investment" (ROI) and leveraging of resources.
- Target statewide sector-based strategies that have the greatest opportunity for economic impact and job creation.
- Leverage opportunity for business support at all stages, including stage one entrepreneurship, second stage expansion, and third stage maturity.
- Work with CWDC Director and staff as well as local and regional leaders to increase communication and encourage collaboration for the benefit of Colorado and all of its communities.
- Represent their local region, but also see beyond regional issues to make decisions that are best for all partners in a "bigger picture."
- Act as an Ambassador for CWDC and its partners at local, state, and federal levels.

Time Commitment of CWDC Members

- Council Meetings/Communications:
  - Participate in six (6) Council meetings a year. NOTE: Three meetings per year will be in person, while the other three will utilize a virtual format. Virtual meetings will be limited to 1.5 hours and all information required for discussion and/or decisions will be sent in advance. There will be pre-work before each meeting that typically takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete. Please see the CWDC Meeting Calendar.
  - The Council Director and Chair will contact Council members regarding time sensitive issues as needed between meetings. Members' time will be respected and members are asked to respond in a timely manner as well.
  - Members are asked to participate in at least one standing sub-committee or task group (formed as needed); Council staff supports the committees and task groups to minimize the time required of members.

- Council Member Terms:
  - Council members serve 3-year terms.


• Key Industries
• Trade Organizations
• Businesses
Industry
Workers & Students
Sector Partnerships
Priorities
Opportunities
Challenges
Current and Future Needs
Industry Intermediary
Policies, Standards and Metrics
Federal, State and Local Agencies, Boards and Councils
Career Pathways
Workforce and Education Partners
Assessments
Placements
Services
Training
Education
Workplace learning
Job Opportunities
Connecting Businesses and Qualified Workers
Strategy
Implementation
Outcomes
Feedback
CWDC
DEVELOPING COLORADO'S TALENT
Continuous Improvement
Business Feedback
Evaluation & Analysis
Global Standards
Best Practices
Lessons Learned
Workforce of the Future
Every Coloradan has access to meaningful employment
Every Colorado business has access to a skilled workforce

Creating Colorado's Workforce of the Future

Colorado Workforce Development Council

Vision: Every Colorado business has access to a skilled workforce and every Coloradan has access to meaningful employment, resulting in statewide economic vitality.

Mission: To create and sustain a business-led Colorado talent system that appropriately integrates the work of economic development, education, training and workforce development to meet the needs of businesses, students and job-seekers.

Members & Partners *

Led by Colorado businesses, and driven by a powerful collaboration of state agencies, regional & community organizations

Markets

- Businesses
- Students
- Out of School Youth
- Adults
- Special Populations

Strategic Focus Areas

- More Colorado Jobs & Employment
- Talented & Competitive Workforce
- Increased Capital Investment
- Customer Satisfaction
- Increased Employment Diversity

Statewide Initiatives

- Key Industry Networks
- Sector Partnerships
- Career Pathways

State's ROLE

Key Industry Networks

- 14 Key Industry Networks
- Lead by the Governors Office of Economic Development
- Championed by Industry Assn's
- Umbrella for **state-wide** industry collaboration

Sector Partnerships

- **Regional** / Industry Specific
- Championed by Industry
- Convened by Workforce, Education and Economic Development
- Supported by CWDC and CDLE
- **Informs KSA for Career Pathways**

Career Pathways

- Occupation specific
- Developed to meet industry identified needs
- Built regionally, scaled statewide as needed
- Statewide Taskforce

Foundation

COLORADO BLUEPRINT

- Governor Hickenlooper's bottom-up economic development plan
- Commitment to collaboration from all State Agencies and Partners
- Empowerment & Support of and by Local and Regional Partners