



XAP CASE STUDY:

# INTERACTIVE & REGIONAL CAREER PATHWAYS FOR COLORADO

## LEGISLATION REQUIRED NEW TOOLS FOR ONLINE CAREER PATHWAYS MARKETING

Career Pathways are often shared and marketed to students and adult learners using pages filled with data. Too often the exciting opportunities presented by the pathway are lost amongst the data. Could a new, dynamic online format deliver on the real objectives?

- Showcase high-demand careers
- Present in-demand skill needs identified by local industry
- Outline the qualifications for the careers
- Visualize the variety of paths to these jobs
- Share information on support services and the variety of education options

### Challenges

IT occupations have consistently been in high demand in recent years and typically pay good wages. Globally, strong employment growth in IT positions across all industries—not just in the IT sector—is expected, reinforcing the wide range of data and technological literacy demanded by today’s jobs. Yet, despite growth in postsecondary program completions in related disciplines, the number of graduates continues to be inadequate to meet employer demand.

Passed in 2015, Colorado House Bill 15-1274 supports developing career pathways for high-demand industries. The first set of career pathways created focuses on IT occupations; subsequent work will focus on healthcare and construction trades. Essential to this work is cross-agency collaboration including information gathering activities, employer engagement, and establishing a framework for implementation of expanded public and private partnerships focused on career awareness, career readiness and training, work-based learning opportunities, career placement, and access to regional support services available in a given career pathway.

The CWDC created a process outlined in *Creating Career Pathways in Colorado: A Step-by-Step Guide* that includes these steps:

1. Use labor market data projections to understand which occupations are in high demand in terms of growth rates and annual openings.
2. Connect with both regional and state actors in the industry. Let them reflect on the information. Clarify commonly found gaps in skills and the preferred requirements for job employment. Then, organize the in-demand occupations according to related work and similar skill sets found in other industries. This



Colorado Workforce  
Development Council

The Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is a Governor appointed, business led coalition of industry, state agencies, and local partners working to integrate the efforts of workforce and economic development, education and training, government, and business stakeholders to meet the needs of businesses, workers, job-seekers, and students. Through this work, CWDC and its partners are helping to ensure that every Colorado business has access to a skilled workforce and every Coloradan has access to meaningful employment, resulting in statewide economic vitality.

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**CollegeInColorado.org**  
GO FURTHER  GO TO COLLEGE

College In Colorado (CIC) was initiated by the Colorado Department of Higher Education to serve the citizens of the state of Colorado by promoting access to, affordability of, and success in higher education for all students. CIC is charged with helping all Coloradans explore career and education pathways, break down barriers to postsecondary attainment, and create a plan for their postsecondary and workforce success.

A cornerstone of the campaign, [CollegeInColorado.org](http://CollegeInColorado.org), offers a one-stop resource to help parents and students of all ages to explore careers and plan, apply and pay for college.

serves as a logical order of building the capacity and cataloguing “hot jobs” for specialized skills sets within industry pathways.

3. By region, inventory: employers, military connections, early educational opportunities related to the industry, institutions offering related certificates and degrees, concurrent and internship opportunities, and the support services available to help those who are both earning the education and keeping a job.
4. Build and post online “easy to use” statewide and regional career pathway maps.

Step 4 was addressed in the Bill by the requirement to showcase the developed pathways on a free, online state resource. CIC and CWDC realized that, to be successful, this solution needed to be more than PDFs showing career pathway diagrams downloadable from a website as most similar implementations produce. These solutions are so crammed with required data that they become ineffective for students and adults.

## How XAP Is Helping

To address the fourth step of this process and the legislative requirement, the logical decision was to use [CollegeInColorado.org](http://CollegeInColorado.org) as the home for the online career pathways. As the host of [CollegeInColorado.org](http://CollegeInColorado.org) since its launch in 2002, XAP was the natural choice to extend the software to meet this new need.

To meet legislative deadlines, XAP worked collaboratively with CWDC and CIC to quickly implement a first phase of high-demand industry-awareness profiles at [CareersInColorado.org](http://CareersInColorado.org) that will be expanded and enhanced in the second phase of the project. These initial online industry profiles were launched ahead of the deadline in less than 60 days.

For the second phase, CIC and CWDC are again collaborating with XAP to define and design interactive career pathway modules to be integrated into [CareersInColorado.org](http://CareersInColorado.org) and [CollegeInColorado.org](http://CollegeInColorado.org). These innovative modules will allow students and adult learners to see an overview of each IT industry career pathway and then explore the opportunities in the pathway by walking through the pathway using an innovative, interactive interface. The user experience may be likened to a Google Street View for career pathways.

Following the legislative timetable, the IT career pathways will be deployed in 2016 and the Healthcare and Construction industry career pathways in 2017.

## The Results So Far

This story is still unfolding as the design and development of XAP’s new module powering the IT industry career pathways proceeds through the balance of 2016.

The data-driven design of the career pathways module will allow students and adults to walk through career pathways on desktop browsers and mobile devices. The visual design supports interaction and discovery within the pathway and industry data. The module is also being designed to accept data and render their pathways as other key industries are added.

The Colorado Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) is being integrated to provide up-to-date regional education options for all career pathways. In fact, the data model, designed in collaboration with CIC and CWDC, supports regional pathway data and content when it has been defined.

Industry-identified competencies and a related skills gap analysis for careers of interest will be included in the details view for careers on the pathways.

Julia Pirnack, Director of Web and Curriculum Development at College In Colorado commented: “Early glimpses into the interaction design for the career pathways module is very promising. College In Colorado is pleased to add this dynamic tool to the many we offer that help students in Colorado understand their education and workforce opportunities.”

## Contact XAP

To learn more about XAP’s Career Pathways Initiative and how it can work for your career pathways, contact XAP at 800-281-1168 or [info@xap.com](mailto:info@xap.com) or Susan Sowah, Director, Statewide Initiatives at [ssowah@xap.com](mailto:ssowah@xap.com) or 613.851.6661.

The College In Colorado team reaches out to students, parents, educators, workforce and reentry centers through ongoing events and training opportunities, as well as providing practical tools to assist every student in Colorado in furthering their education past high school.

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*There is a pathway for every student. Let XAP help them find, plan for, and achieve it.*