

Achieving Gender Equity in Colorado Apprenticeships

By Christina Postolowski and Erin Steva, October 2018

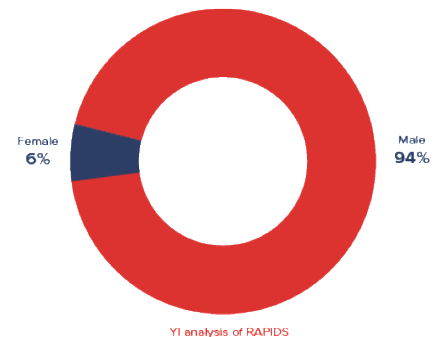
Colorado is positioning itself as a national leader in apprenticeship programs. But to date, Colorado's apprenticeships have largely failed to employ women. Only six percent - or 317 - active Registered Apprentices (RAs) in Colorado are women.¹ Among active female RAs in Colorado, only 4 percent - or 14 women - are in what the state calls Tier 1 "Top Jobs" that pay a living wage for a family of three.² As a result, businesses are missing out on top talent and women are not connected to these high-growth, well-paying career pathways.

Young Invincibles (YI) analyzed data on RAs in Colorado from the U.S. Department of Labor's (USDOL) Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS); conducted focus groups with young women ages 16 to 34 in the Denver Metro Area³ to find out what they knew about, and wanted from, apprenticeship programs; and researched best practices for creating equitable apprenticeships from other states. Notably, YI found that when Colorado women do start an RA program, they are more likely to complete than their male counterparts. Forty percent of female RAs who started between 2010-2015 have completed their program, compared to only 27 percent of male RAs.⁴ Therefore, businesses looking to hire trained workers would benefit from enrolling more women in their apprenticeships.

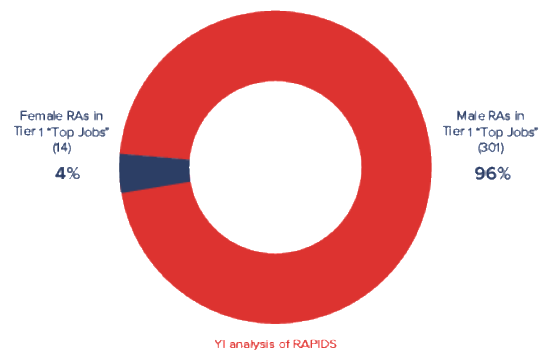
Below are YI's top recommendations for Colorado to recruit more female apprentices.

- **Set a gender equity target** to reach gender parity in apprenticeship participation in Colorado over the next 15 years. This would result in women holding 45 percent of apprenticeship positions by 2034.⁵
- **Fund apprenticeship consultants** with expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to support businesses offering RAs in high-paying, traditionally male-dominated fields with recruiting and retaining female apprentices.
- **Release disaggregated data annually** on who participates in RAs and non-registered apprenticeships in Colorado to track progress toward the state's gender equity target.
- **Increase access to quality, affordable child care** to support parents in apprenticeships and the workforce.
- **Employ best practices for recruiting women**, like including salary information in all apprenticeship marketing materials and expanding partnerships with community-based organizations that work with women.

Active Colorado Apprentices by Gender, 2018



Active Colorado Apprentices in Tier 1 "Top Jobs" by Gender, 2018



Gender Equity Target

To become a leader in apprenticeship equity, Colorado should set a clear target for gender equity in apprenticeship participation,⁶ coupled with the resources and information to reach that target. States, cities, and RA programs have been able to move the needle on gender and racial equity in apprenticeship participation by setting and tracking numeric goals.⁷ Colorado is employing the right strategies to achieve gender equity by both developing new apprenticeship programs in fields that employ large numbers of women, and seeking to improve the gender diversity of fields in where women are underrepresented. South Carolina increased female participation in apprenticeships from ten to 33 percent in nine years, largely due to adding RAs in the health care field.⁸ With a firm commitment, Colorado can increase women's apprenticeship participation to reflect their percentage of the workforce - 45 percent - by 2034.

Apprenticeship Consultants

Achieving gender equity apprenticeships in Colorado not only means increasing the percentage of female apprentices, but also the percentage of women pursuing apprenticeships in Tier 1 Top Jobs with the highest pay. Five out of the six Tier 1 Top Jobs that currently offer RAs are in traditionally male-dominated occupations.⁹ In YI's focus groups, every female RA in a male-dominated job said they experienced harassment or discrimination. Participants also said the quality of their mentors was central to their RA experience. South Carolina increased their total number of apprenticeships thirty-six fold over 11 years with a \$1 million annual budget that included six apprenticeship consultants.¹⁰ In Colorado, sector partnerships and CareerWise Colorado provide general technical assistance on apprenticeships. But Colorado needs increased, intentional expertise around DEI to achieve gender equity in these programs. Colorado should fund a team of apprenticeship consultants who are DEI experts to help businesses and the state develop strategies for recruiting and retaining women, creating inclusive workplaces, and improving mentorship skills.

Publicly Available Data

Colorado should publish consumer-friendly, disaggregated data on apprenticeship participation annually to track progress toward its gender equity goal. Colorado should start by analyzing and publishing the data that is currently available (by request) on RAs and youth apprenticeships from USDOL and CareerWise Colorado. Colorado should add data on non-registered apprenticeships when this information becomes available from USDOL (slated to create a tracking tool by September 30, 2019).¹ The disaggregated data should include information on apprentice occupations, completion rates, and wage growth by demographic whenever available. The legislature should appropriate funding for two agency staff annually to analyze and publish the data, and work on improvement plans with employers based on this information.

Child Care

All stakeholders, including the Colorado General Assembly, state agencies, businesses, schools, and community groups should work together to increase the number and accessibility of quality child care providers in Colorado. Government entities can do this by building on current Two-Generation (2Gen) Approaches to serving families, and expanding opportunities to use federal funding like the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to support child care. Businesses, schools, and community organizations can support working parents by providing on-site child care, investing in child care programs through philanthropy, and advocating for policies that would increase the number of quality, affordable child care providers.

Recruitment

State agencies, businesses, schools, and community groups can also work together to recruit more women in RAs in Colorado. Apprenticeship programs should employ best practices for recruiting women and people of color, including increasing in-person outreach, providing opportunities for people to explore “non-traditional” fields, and including salary information in all marketing materials. And businesses and schools with apprenticeships should expand partnerships with community-based organizations to recruit more women and people of color into their programs.

¹ YI’s analysis of the U.S. Department of Labor’s (USDOL) Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS). Hispanic and black people are overrepresented in RAs in Colorado compared to their representation in the state workforce, which is why we have chosen to focus on gender here. Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), “Colorado’s Employment Demographic Profile,” in *Occupational Health Indicators Report: 2015 Update* (Denver: 2015), 3.

² YI’s analysis of RAPIDS and the Colorado Workforce Development Council’s (CWDC) *2017 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report* (Denver: Colorado Dept. of Labor and Employment). We focus on Tier 1 occupations because 62 percent of Colorado mothers are working to support their family. Ryan Erickson and Danielle Corley, *Fast Facts: Economic Security for Colorado Families* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2016), 1.

³ Three quarters of focus group participants who shared their race or ethnicity identified as women of color.

⁴ YI’s analysis of RAPIDS.

⁵ Women made up an average of 45 percent of Colorado’s workforce for 2000-2013. CDPHE, “Colorado’s Employment Demographic Profile,” 3.

⁶ This target should apply across all RAs and youth apprenticeships through CareerWise Colorado, and could be expanded to include all paid apprenticeships in the state. Participation by women in unpaid apprenticeships should not count toward the equity target.

⁷ See Erin Steva and Allie Aguilera, *Closing the Divide: Making Illinois a Leader in Equitable Apprenticeships* (Chicago: YI, 2018), 6-7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers, Stationary Engineers and Boiler Operators, Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers, and Information Security Analysts. CWDC, *2017 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*, Appendix D.

¹⁰ And a small tax credit for employers. “By the Numbers,” Apprenticeship Carolina, accessed June 5, 2018, <https://www.apprenticeshipcarolina.com/by-the-numbers.html>.

¹¹ Rosemary Lahasky and Laurie Rowe, “Job Creation: Apprenticeship Expansion,” USDOL, 2, https://www.performance.gov/labor/FY2018_Q2_DOL_Job_Creation_Apprenticeship_Expansion.pdf.