



WORKFORCE: A Throttle on American Growth

A 50-STATE SCAN OF BUSINESS EFFORTS TO
ADDRESS THE NATIONAL WORKFORCE CHALLENGE



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BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The National Association of State Chambers (NASC) is pleased to present a first ever, comprehensive, 50-state study on workforce engagement by our members and some of the best practices that have emerged. NASC's Chamber members represent over 100,000 job creators who employ 50 percent of the total private sector workforce in the United States. NASC has an overall mission to *connect, and leverage state chambers of commerce so they can unite and mobilize the collective impact of employers in the promotion of free enterprise.* The ability of the free enterprise system to function is being rocked to its core with the need for workforce solutions.

Site Selection magazine recently stated: "COVID-19 changed our world in countless ways, but one of the biggest was its impact on the war for talent. If the global pandemic taught us anything, it was that worker shortages are the new norm and that new rules for talent attraction are being written daily."* Our members and their employers are on the front line of talent acquisition, and they are asking for assistance navigating this "new norm". Our goal with this study was to provide our members, all employers, and elected officials with the ideas and tools they need to navigate our current worker shortages and skill mismatches, both in the short term and the long term.

We thank Ted Abernathy, Greg Payne and the outstanding team at Economic Leadership for compiling and presenting this study. Our work here would not have been possible without the support and underwriting from Littler's Workplace Policy Institute and their Emma Coalition, which is the first and only employer-focused, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to preparing American businesses and government for TIDE (technology induced displacement of employment).



Heather Mulligan, Esq.
Chair
NASC Board of Directors

*Site Selection magazine, The Top 10 Workforce Issues of 2022

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WORKFORCE: A Throttle on American Growth

A 50-STATE SCAN OF BUSINESS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE NATIONAL WORKFORCE CHALLENGE

Introduction

In recent surveys of the most important site selection factors among American businesses, three of the top five criteria are directly related to talent quality and availability:

- Availability of Skilled Labor
- Labor Costs
- Quality of Life

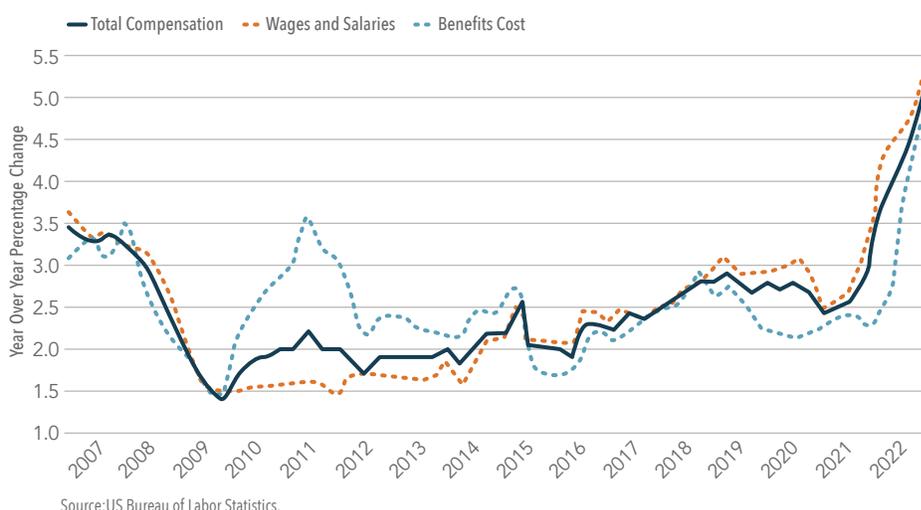
This will surprise absolutely no one among the members of the National Association of State Chambers and the companies they represent. Still, the national employment picture as of mid-2022 is particularly daunting, no matter how much experience business leaders might have. Among the many factors contributing to the current situation are demographics, mobility trends, immigration, skill levels and mismatches, the impacts of technology and automation, and the suitability of current education and training models.

A few data points clearly illustrate the nature and extent of current workforce challenges:

- There were 1.9 job openings per available worker in the latest federal Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) report.

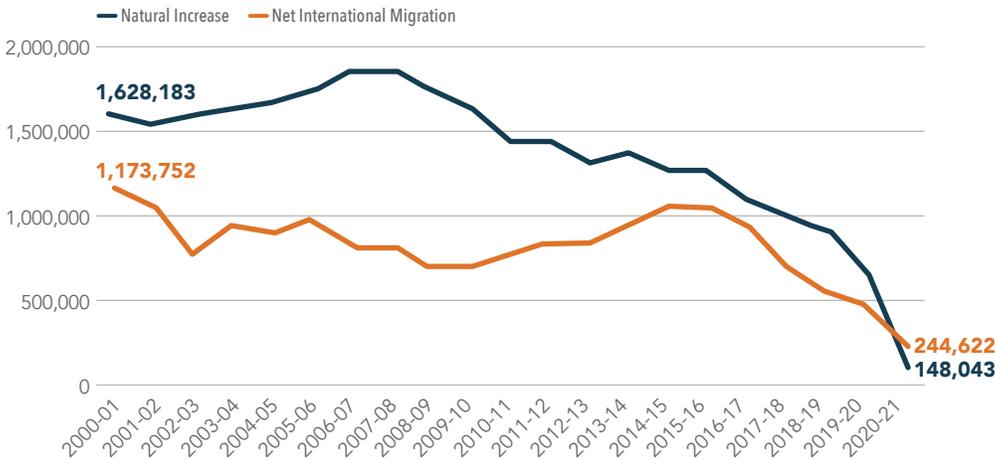
- The latest national labor force participation rate was 62.2 percent, still below the pre-COVID rate of 63.4 percent from February 2020. This rate was 67 percent in 2000. In addition to many women leaving the labor force due to childcare or elder care demands, participation among those ages 55 and older dropped by two percent during the economic shutdown and has yet to recover.
- The employment cost index for U.S. businesses has soared as companies scramble to return to normal activity levels following the COVID economic shutdown.
- Very high employee “quit rates” have persisted. Most of these workers don’t have another job lined up when they quit, and a majority are looking in a different field. Research suggests that many become re-employed at higher wages.
- The United States’ population growth rate was 0.12 percent from July 2020 to July 2021, the slowest growth in American history. A significant majority of U.S. counties are seeing their working-age population drop. County data is similar for population change in the under-15 age bracket.

EMPLOYMENT COST INDEX



While the quantity of American workers is one important part of the equation, the other is the quality of the workforce as measured by relevant skills.

US COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH



Source: US Census NST-EST-COMP

While the quantity of American workers is one important part of the equation, the other is the quality of the workforce as measured by relevant skills. Skill mismatches may be exacerbated by the apparent desirability of obtaining a four-year college degree over other education and training career paths.

Pre-COVID statistics show that 66 percent of high school graduates were enrolled in college in the fall of their

graduation year. However, estimates of future job demands are that about a quarter of jobs are likely to require a four-year college degree. Another 40 to 50 percent will be middle-skill jobs requiring some post-high school education or training. (Also, it is projected that 30 to 40 percent of adult workers will need reskilling every decade.)

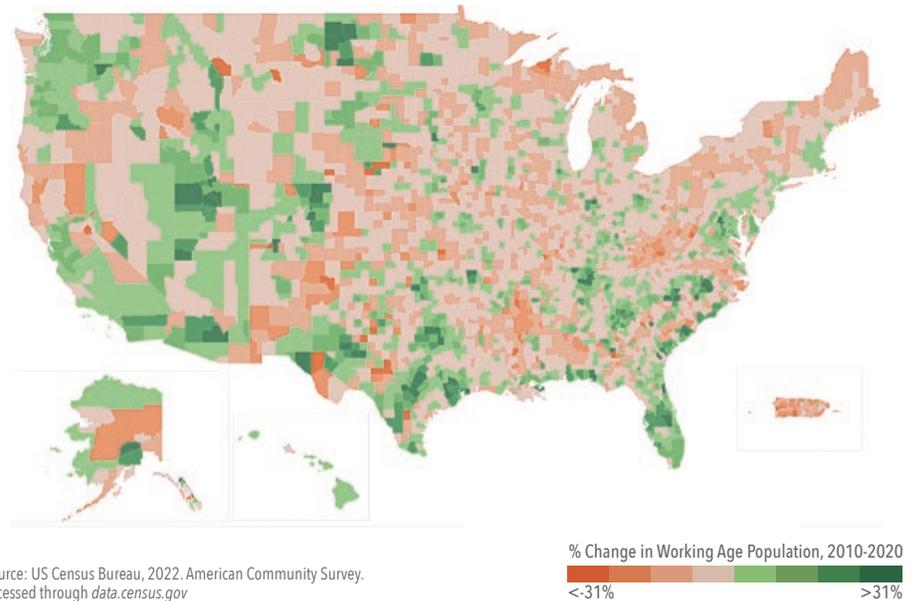
INTRODUCTION CONT.

State Chambers Respond

State chambers and their member employers are unquestionably facing the impacts of these challenging, short-term and long-term trends. While a few chambers included a focus on workforce as early as the 1980s, for most it has “exploded” as a critical issue within the past five years. As the U.S. economy slowly but steadily rebounded from the financial crisis and Great Recession, the labor market grew tighter and tighter. The national unemployment rate fell below five percent in 2016 and below four percent by 2018. Since that time, workforce has emerged as “THE” issue among chamber members large and small. As economic activity has rebounded in robust fashion after the COVID-induced shutdown, workforce availability and skill challenges are “at a peak,” inhibiting company expansion and success.

As one midwestern chamber executive noted, when they started with their organization 17 years ago, perhaps 20 or 25 percent of members mentioned the importance of workforce. Now, it is the top issue for 100 percent of their members. Related issues like childcare and housing—which were rarely raised

COUNTY CHANGE IN WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2010-2020



as important topics before—are now prominent in state-level discussions. Another state executive speaks for many others when they say that in their chamber’s most recent strategic plan, workforce is the most important driver “by far.” Numerous member surveys show it to be the number one priority. Employers are “losing their minds” about workforce shortages, and will “do anything possible” to address them.

The workforce challenges are varied and complex, defying easy solutions. There are the immediate challenges of very small applicant pools, of simply not enough warm bodies. The “silver tsunami” of worker retirements sped up during the pandemic, accentuating the numbers problem. At the same time there’s a focus on the need for the appropriate “skills, skills, skills” for positions at all levels.

There are also very long-term challenges—as one state chamber puts it, planning for not just the next four years but for the “next four generations.” One commonly-cited need is to create a “cultural shift” in America in which alternate career paths are valued as highly as obtaining a four-year college degree. Re-tooling each state’s workforce system and educational institutions, often entrenched in their ways, is not a quick process. A chamber leader in the southeast said that the pandemic shone a “bright light” on existing challenges like the sluggish K-12 school response to modern workplace needs. While determined to improve hiring conditions for their members short-term, chambers are also aware of the need for patient planning and follow-through to create a better workforce system for years to come. It “takes a few years to move an entire state,” as one noted.

An ideal workforce system might include at least these four attributes: 1) real-time, comprehensive data and

inventory of assets; 2) this information disseminated to all parties, from businesses to policy makers to parents and students; 3) the resources needed to deliver excellent services; and 4) the capacity and clout for effective, joint action. Employers clearly have key roles to play in each of these areas.

The 50-state scan in this report demonstrates that chambers, industry associations and member firms will indeed “do anything possible” to improve workforce quantity and quality and build a better system. They strive to increase applicant pools short-term by reaching out to any and all disengaged groups of adults and young people. More and more, they will also invest long-term in the future workforce by supporting campaigns to improve school funding, childcare and pre-K public education. The state snapshots and best practices summary encompass an impressive array of strategies to solve this, the most critical issue facing the American business community.



Best Practices

The 50-state summary of workforce and related education programming and advocacy work demonstrates that there is no shortage of good ideas and effective practices among state chambers and their partners. Many of these could be used to inform the framework and scope of work for any state-level organization interested in boosting its concentration on workforce development as a crucial part of its overall activities.

A. Planning

Several state chambers have developed a written workforce strategic plan as the basis for their policy and programming scope of work. A good written plan can accomplish many things. First, it can use data to clearly define the problem, making it readily apparent why workforce-related challenges have risen to the top of the list among impediments to business growth and success. Second, it can lay out an array of policy and program goals for member companies to get behind, particularly when they see strategies that resonate with their own employment struggles. Third, a good plan lays the groundwork for annual legislative agendas and provides the underlying rationale that can lead elected officials to support policy changes. Lastly, the written plan can be used in recruiting and marketing. Chris Clark of the Georgia Chamber says that its new *Winning the War for Talent*

report gives economic developers a useful recruiting tool, tangible evidence of how seriously Georgia is addressing a critical need.

In addition to *Winning the War for Talent* in Georgia, other notable workforce strategic plans include the Kansas Chamber's *The Challenge to Compete* and the Missouri Chamber's *Workforce 2030*. Some research and planning documents are the results of in-state collaboration. *Making Maine Work* has been a project of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Maine Development Foundation since 2009, with Educate Maine joining in 2018. The collaboration's latest publication is *Making Maine Work 2022: Critical Investments for the Maine Economy*.

B. Organization and Staffing

A number of state organizations have created a concerted focus around workforce and education

via a new, dedicated entity. A leading example in the United States is the Kentucky Chamber's **Workforce Center**, started within the chamber's foundation in early 2017. The Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center is guided by a 21-member Board of Managers, and nine foundation employees are dedicated to workforce development. In Connecticut, the public education-focused non-profit **ReadyCT** was created in 2011 following a governor's task force finding that the state had one of the nation's worst education achievement gaps. ReadyCT now has a staff of 15, a \$2.5 million annual budget, and board members that include the Connecticut Business & Industry Association's Chris DiPentima.

Other dedicated workforce entities include:

- The Indiana Chamber's **Institute for Workforce Excellence (IWE)**, launched in 2018. The IWE has a 30-member Advisory Council, with

half of its members representing business and community organizations, and half representing education and government. The IWE is led by Jason Bearce, Vice President for Education & Workforce Development.

- **The Partnership**, an arm of the Delaware State Chamber. The Partnership is more than 20 years old, but was retooled in 2018 to focus entirely on workforce.
- The Minnesota Chamber Foundation's **Center for Workforce Solutions**, which is used to attract grant funding to address workforce issues in the state.
- The Association of Washington Business' **AWB Institute**. The **AWB Institute** establishes the vision for workforce development, provides data and research, and implements programming.
- The North Carolina Chamber's new **Institute for Workforce Competitiveness** (IWC), created this year within the Chamber Foundation. The IWC's initial task is to inventory promising workforce practices by businesses around the state and broadcast successful models that can be replicated.

Staffing levels vary widely, starting with ReadyCT's 15 employees, and the nine staffers dedicated to workforce at Kentucky's Workforce Center and

affiliated foundation. Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) has portions of seven staff positions focused on workforce advocacy and programming. Smaller organizations make do with less. The Delaware State Chamber's The Partnership is a workforce-focused entity with just one full-time employee and an annual budget of around \$100,000.

Organizations that are heavily invested in education and workforce development don't always need to have numerous employees with workforce-focused titles, however. The sprawling Florida Chamber Enterprise produces an impressive array of related research, data, programming and advocacy on these topics without a dedicated entity or department. Instead, the Florida Chamber views workforce and education as being embedded in everything it does, and almost all of its activities as involved with workforce and education. The work of 40 or more of its staffers might touch on workforce at any given time.

C. Funding

Funding for workforce and education activities varies tremendously, with groups like Indiana's Institute for Workforce Excellence (\$4 million approximate annual budget), Connecticut's ReadyCT (\$2.5 million), and the Tennessee Chamber's foundation (\$2.4 million) being

examples from the top end. A more representative example would be Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, with an annual budget of about \$650,000 for workforce-related efforts.

Sadly, there is no magic bullet for finding revenues or a pot of gold to mine. Most state organizations rely on private sector fundraising campaigns for programming, as well as member dues for policy work. But, establishing a 501c3 and aggressively seeking grants and donations can change the revenue equation to enable expansion of workforce and education efforts.

One or two private sector champions can provide a foundation for increased program budgets. Leading businesses from this report include Chase Bank, Raytheon, Cerner, and Stanley Black & Decker. Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) dollars from financial institutions can be another good source. Philanthropy oriented toward education and workforce development can make a major impact as well. Foundations contributing heavily to state-level program success include the Lilly Endowment, Lumina Foundation, Strada, Gates Foundation, Stupski Foundation, and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. Chambers would be well-served to concentrate on foundations with some existing tie to their state. In South Dakota, an

BEST PRACTICES CONT.

in-state philanthropy teamed with the state-operated South Dakota Future Fund in 2015 to make \$50 million in Build Dakota Scholarships available for technical education.

Some chambers will not accept any government grants or other government funds. Others, however, have tapped federal and state grants to ramp up their workforce programming.

D. Measuring

It is difficult to make a persuasive case for investments in workforce and education if you fail to track and report on important demographic, economic, labor force and employment data. If a state organization is not doing this, starting now will lay the baseline to gauge trends and progress toward policy and program goals.

The Florida Chamber's Florida Scorecard provides a dashboard with metrics across six pillars including Talent Supply & Education. The Florida Chamber digs deep on the numbers, with additional tools such as the Florida Gap Map, an interactive map showing third-grade reading scores and child poverty measures for every ZIP code in every county in the state. The chamber is also doing deeper dives into skill gaps with its Florida Workforce Needs Studies 1.0 and 2.0.

In Colorado, the public-private partnership Colorado Workforce Development Council disaggregated data to illustrate that although a prosperous state overall, Colorado has major equity gaps. The Workforce Development Council's Talent Equity Agenda is based on research highlighting that Colorado ranks 12th in overall prosperity, but 37th in the nation when accounting for disparities between white residents and those of color.

In an environment where most states will find no easy solution for workforce shortages, a detailed examination of labor force supply and participation can pinpoint opportunities. The Governor's Office of Economic Development in Nevada commissioned such a study in 2020. This labor force study called attention to the fact that 300,000 Nevada adults can be identified as underemployed, a subset of the workforce that is "normally more experienced, better educated, and more motivated than the Total Available workforce in general." This study concluded that the 300,000 underemployed provide "the best opportunity" to improve applicant pools in Nevada.

E. Advocacy

All across the country, there have been significant recent legislative successes pushed through by state chambers. The examples below touch on many key topics related to improving workforce development and education, and can serve as templates for action in other states.

Major Education and Training Funds

- Future Ready Oregon, passed in 2022, allocates \$200 million in a comprehensive package focused on training for "family-wage careers," with an emphasis on recruitment, retention and career advancement for underserved communities.
- Ohio TechCred allows employers to apply for funds to upskill existing and new workers. Begun with \$1 million in state funding in 2019, the Ohio legislature most recently funded TechCred at \$58.3 million for the 2022-23 biennium.
- Wyoming's state legislature funded the Tomorrow Scholarship program at \$10 million in 2022. The public college scholarships are aimed at the 212,000 adult Wyoming residents without any post-high school degree or credential.

- In 2022, Colorado Senate Bill 140, Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities, provided \$6.1 million for employers to develop work-based learning opportunities.
- Currently under consideration: the South Carolina Chamber is advocating for a \$124 million, two-year package of workforce scholarships to provide free training for in-demand careers at any of the state’s technical colleges.

Several states offer tax credits, or are considering instituting them, for companies that provide apprenticeships, internships, and other training resulting in a recognized credential.

High School CTE and Work-Based Learning

Rhode Island’s Prepare RI is a strong example of a statewide initiative to provide every high school student with an expanded CTE curriculum and a paid summer internship opportunity. The career awareness and readiness program started in 2015.

School Funding and Equity

A key component of the Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire’s policy platform is sufficient funding for public schools everywhere in the state, especially

targeting school dollars “to cities and towns most in need.” BIA of New Hampshire indicates that it will support a constitutional amendment if needed to accomplish equitable and adequate funding.

Child Care

In 2022, the Maryland legislature established the Child Care Capital Support Revolving Loan Fund, with no-interest loans financed by \$30 million in allocations over a three-year period. This year the legislature also adopted changes to the Child Care Scholarship Program by presuming eligibility for financial support so children can be enrolled immediately; and it provided \$53 million in grants to struggling child care centers.

Elsewhere, the West Virginia Chamber applauded the passage of Senate Bill 656 in 2022, to incentivize businesses’ creation of on-site childcare facilities. The bill provides a 100 percent tax credit for startup and initial operating costs, to be taken over five years. Texas has been a national leader in providing free pre-K programs, but the Texas Association of Business continues to emphasize early childhood funding to ensure that the state retains its leadership position.

Housing

A major success for the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry in 2022 was the passage of a \$200 million workforce housing bill. Funds are to be used for infrastructure (such as streets, water and sewer lines) that support housing development. House Bill 1033 established that half of the funding will be grants and half will be made through a revolving loan fund.

Also in 2022, Rhode Island passed a \$12 million act to spur the acquisition of land to be used for the development of deed-restricted affordable housing. The new Site Acquisition Program allows non-profit, for-profit and local government entities to apply for the funds.

Other states and state chambers are investigating ways to incentivize new and renovated housing. In addition to loans, grants and tax credits, regulatory changes can stimulate more housing supply. Zoning that enables greater density, allows a wide range of product types, and permits accessory dwelling units is being adopted or considered by many local and state governments.

BEST PRACTICES CONT.

State-Level Workforce Office

Creating a cabinet-level office of workforce development signals to the business community the state's commitment to making talent, education and training top priorities. Recent successes in this area include the establishment of Accelerate Mississippi and Connecticut's Office of Workforce Strategy, led by a "workforce czar" who is required to come from a business background.

Immigration:

Not only a federal-level issue, some state chambers are pushing for immigration-related policy changes in their state. The Georgia Chamber is advocating for in-state tuition for DACA participants, which would affect 15,000 students per year.

F. Programming

Operating workforce-related programs can be a staff and time-intensive undertaking. Still, many chambers believe that it is worthwhile to plug gaps in the existing system, especially to connect businesses with future workers and existing resources. A few of the many programming success stories are outlined below.

Career Awareness and Career Paths

The lauded Be Pro Be Proud program started in Arkansas and has expanded to South Carolina and Georgia, with other states on the way. In Minnesota's Business Education Network, the Minnesota Chamber partners with local chambers to raise student awareness of career paths for leading industry sectors in their region. HBCU STEM in South Carolina features companies like Boeing providing career preparation content in STEM careers for students at seven in-state universities. Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce's long-running Wisconsin Business World program engages students to learn about business and entrepreneurship opportunities in the state.

Internships

Work & Learn Indiana has matched 15,000 college students with business internships since 2006, and now includes high school students.

Talent Pipelines

The U.S. Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management program has been used in more than 20 industries and in a majority of states.

Industry Sector Strategies

The 10-year-old ELEVATE Iowa advanced manufacturing initiative focuses on career awareness, education and training, and job placement. Chamber of Commerce Hawaii used a Strada Foundation grant to launch sector partnerships now covering the healthcare, engineering, and information technology sectors.

Boosting Labor Force Participation

States and state chambers are pursuing every possible avenue to reach disengaged residents and increase labor force participation. Virginia's Hire Vets Now strives to retain the 20,000 military personnel in Virginia who leave active duty each year. Programs to provide support and services for more women to thrive in the workforce include Associated Industries of Massachusetts' Pink Slip initiative and Utah's guide to closing the Gender Wage Gap.

States are promoting second-chance hiring of ex-offenders through pre-release and post-release education, training and support services. In conjunction with an increase in

chamber-run diversity initiatives, some DEI programs are broadly inclusive of groups under-represented in the active workforce, such as people with disabilities or women historically under-represented in sectors like manufacturing.

Connecting Businesses with Resources

Indiana's new Talent Resource Navigator, supported by the Lilly Endowment, is an online one-stop shop to guide employers on where to find all training-related programs and funding, and expand their talent pipelines.

Training Grants to Upskill Workers

Utah's Custom Fit has a 30-year track record of providing customized training for Utah employers through the state's technical colleges. In a recent year, Custom Fit impacted 19,000 trainees in Utah. Alaska's State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grants are available for companies, educators, other for-profits and non-profits to upskill employees in eight high-demand

industries. STEP is funded by a set-aside from the state's unemployment insurance trust fund.

Dropout Prevention

The New Jersey Chamber operates a leading affiliate of the national Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program, which has a track record of more than 40 years. JAG serves at-risk youth and guides them toward graduation, full-time employment or post-secondary education.

Publicizing Innovative Programs

The Business Council of New York State's Workforce Innovation Awards recognizes innovation from P-12 schools, higher education, business and non-profits.

Regional Solutions

The Business Council of Alabama supported and promoted the recent opening of the West Alabama Center for Workforce and Community Development. The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama partnered with Regions Bank to obtain space for the new, 42,000 square foot regional workforce center in Tuscaloosa.

The best practices summarized here highlight the impressive array of thoughtful, aggressive actions that state chambers across America are taking to address what might be the top competitiveness issue of our time. In some state organizations there is a deliberate, concerted effort to build up the organizational, staffing and funding capacity to understand workforce and education issues, craft a strategic plan, and initiate advocacy and programming efforts. But even among small state organizations that lack the resources, it is clear that they, their partners and business members are willing to experiment and take risks, to test any promising strategy for improving workforce quantity and quality. The U.S. business community, through its state-level chambers, is generating tremendous momentum toward finding solutions that will benefit employers and the workforce, boosting the country's prospects for a more prosperous future.

Federal Legislative Priorities

FROM STATE CHAMBERS

Not all state organizations actively lobby at the federal level, but there are many for which federal policy is an important priority. Some chambers have made federal-level policy changes a critical part of their program of work. The state organizations that participated in this report advocate for federal policy and program changes in the issue areas below.



Immigration

Far and away and without a doubt, immigration reform is the number one national policy concern of state chambers and their members. To sum up opinions about the scope of needed reforms in one word, that word would be comprehensive! State organizations feel strongly that immigration reform needs to be addressed in a holistic manner, covering all skills levels and responsive to labor market demands in the United States.

At higher skills levels, states stress the need for a sufficient supply and timely process for highly educated foreign workers to obtain H-1B visas, NAFTA professional TN visas, and green cards. The United States also needs an improved H-2 guest worker program, and a more reliable, workable national employee verification system. Some employers call E-Verify a “disaster” although they may not be willing to say this publicly. Many state chambers also call for legal protections for DACA individuals and a path for undocumented immigrants to obtain citizenship. Priority could be given to undocumented youth who graduate from college or enlist in the U.S. military.

Related issues mentioned by chambers include refugee resettlement and occupational licensing for immigrants with professional backgrounds. Both federal and state governments could improve policies and funding to smooth the path for refugees to settle in the U.S., and for skilled refugees and other immigrants to quickly return to practicing the profession for which they are trained.



Apprenticeships

Federal Registered Apprenticeships are a relative success story, with nearly 600,000 active apprentices in the country at the end of FY 2021 and 242,000 new apprentices. Participation has risen about 60 percent in the past decade. However, the percentage of the U.S. labor force in an apprenticeship is a small fraction of that in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

In America, most businesses experienced with Registered Apprenticeships view them as effective but cumbersome. State chambers and manufacturing councils urge greater speed, flexibility and nimbleness in this program. One suggestion is for the U.S. Department of Labor to partner closely with the National Association of Manufacturers to make the program more responsive to market needs. Registered Apprenticeships should also embrace a wide variety of occupations not traditionally associated with apprenticeship.



WIOA Reauthorization

Several state organizations noted the importance of WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) reauthorization. Since authorization expired in 2020, the first priority is that reauthorization actually happens. A reauthorization bill passed the House in 2022, but is unlikely to be taken up by the Senate this year. State observers want an updated WIOA that is sufficiently funded and flexible enough to encourage training innovation. Others think that local Workforce Development Boards or Workforce Investment Boards need greater standards for professionalism through board member qualifications and accountability.

Another federal workforce program mentioned is the Perkins Act for career and technical education (CTE) funding. Perkins V is currently in effect and funded through FY 2024. State chamber members would like to see increased Perkins flexibility especially for short-term, non-credit training courses.



Career Awareness

States call for a national-level career awareness initiative highlighting the attractiveness of technical careers and other career paths that do not require a four-year college degree. This could be accompanied by measures to offer a wide variety of in-demand career paths in public K-12 schools.



Childcare and Housing

The extremely tight labor market has drawn much more attention to prerequisites for labor force participation in much of the country; namely the availability and quality of childcare and the availability and affordability of housing. Measures have passed in several state legislatures to spur government, private sector and non-profit solutions. Congress could, at the least, create new incentives for the private sector to increase the supply of quality childcare and housing.



Benefit Cliffs

Several state organizations advocate for the review of and adjustments to federal benefit programs, especially the “cliffs” with drastic drop-offs in benefits that can occur as recipients’ incomes increase. These benefit cliffs can discourage people from accepting a job offer or from moving up to a better, higher-paying job.



OSHA Regulations

Some state groups also press for a review of OSHA regulations especially related to worker age and workplace safety. A review should ensure that requirements are reflective of modern workplaces that are typically cleaner, safer environments than those found decades ago.



Alabama

The Business Council of Alabama (BCA) was formed in 1985 from the merger of Associated Industries of Alabama and the Alabama Chamber of Commerce. BCA advocates for policy improvements in many areas of education and workforce development. Among its recent advocacy successes are:

- An **Apprenticeship Bill** that made it easier for students to access apprenticeships and obtain certification in a skill or trade. It also required state agencies, boards and commissions to recognize apprenticeship credentials and occupational licenses obtained through this training.
- The **Alabama Numeracy Act** to boost the math skills of Alabama students. The act provided \$80 million for more math coaches in schools, especially those deemed to be low-performing.
- Record funding for the **Education Trust Fund** budget. The \$8.3 billion allocated in the 2022 legislative session was a seven percent increase from the prior year. Funding included support for the above-described Numeracy Act, \$94 million for the Alabama Reading Initiative, \$48 million for

the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative, and \$22.5 million for the state's First-Class Pre-K program.

- **Commercial Driver's License**—a recent bill lowered the eligible age to receive a CDL from 21 to 18, to address a widespread shortage of commercial drivers.

The Business Council of Alabama also supports and promotes related efforts from local and regional chambers around the state. For example, the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama (serving the Tuscaloosa area) held a grand opening in 2021 for the new, 42,000 square foot West Alabama Center for Workforce and Community Development. A chamber visit to Commerce Lexington in Kentucky demonstrated to members the value of combining resources to create a one-stop stop that addresses multiple community needs. Regions Bank made available its former primary Tuscaloosa facility, which became the home of the new Center for Workforce and Community Development. Partners co-locating with the chamber in the new facility include West Alabama Works, The Dannon Project and Junior Achievement.

Among other state-level efforts in Alabama, the Lt. Governor's Commission on 21st Century Workforce released a major report in 2020 to evaluate existing education and workforce efforts and propose steps to better align and improve them. The report, *Accelerating the Transformation to Excellence*, made recommendations in nine areas such as:

- Boosting workforce quantity and participation through talent attraction and retention programs and reducing residents' barriers to labor force participation;
- Increased business engagement via strong Regional Workforce Councils in all parts of the state;
- Expanded career coaching in K-12 schools;
- Better communications and marketing efforts about the value of careers requiring less than a four-year college degree; and
- More workforce and education resources in rural areas of Alabama.

Alaska



Given the multitude of state-level workforce and education programs carried out by public and private organizations, the Alaska Chamber chooses to focus its efforts on being the pro-business voice in the state, to improve Alaska's competitiveness as a business destination.

Although Alaska hit record-low unemployment in the spring of 2022, the state's employment picture is bifurcated. Two of Alaska's leading industries—oil and gas production, and mining—offer lucrative, high-paying jobs, and these workers stayed on the job during COVID. The two historically have been able to attract employees from inside and outside the state. But other sectors, like the important tourism and hospitality sector, are hurting. Some workers have not returned after the pandemic-induced shutdowns. Fewer young people are coming from other states to support the industry. Visa-related issues hinder the hiring of foreign workers. For professional positions, local talent that leaves Alaska is another concern.

Much workforce training in Alaska is coordinated by industry trade associations. On its *webuildalaska* website, The Associated General Contractors of Alaska highlights the impressive pay available for boilermakers (\$47 per hour), electrical

linemen (\$61 per hour), and sheet metal workers (\$49). The Alaska Works Partnership, started in 1996, obtains funding from members and public sector sources to offer a range of construction training programs:

- Apprenticeship Outreach;
- Alaska Construction Academy in multiple locations;
- Helmets to Hardhats to connect military personnel with apprenticeship and training opportunities;
- Women in the Trades outreach to girls and women, including pre-apprenticeship courses.

Another important player in Alaska is the University of Alaska, which places an uncommon level of emphasis on workforce development compared with other four-year schools in America. The university is responsive to business needs with a workforce program centered around:

1. Pre-college programs including dual enrollment.
2. Career-oriented certificate and degree programs with more than 200 CTE offerings.
3. Continuing education and professional development for adult workers.

The Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development offers training grants through the State Training and Employment Program (STEP), funded by a set-aside from the unemployment insurance trust fund. STEP grants are available to employers, educators, and other for-profit and non-profit groups to upskill adult workers. The grants are geared toward jobs in eight high-demand industries, from health care to IT to the seafood industry. The Department of Labor & Workforce Development also helps to coordinate federally-registered apprenticeships. Alaska ranks 40th nationally in the number of active and new apprentices, above-average given that the state ranks 48th in population.

The Alaska Chamber notes that hiring concerns are likely to persist. The state has been allocated a high level of federal infrastructure project dollars per capita, which could lead to a construction boom. However, finding enough workers to fill the available positions will almost certainly be a challenge.



Arkansas

In Arkansas, existing workforce challenges have simply become more acute. The Arkansas State Chamber and Associated Industries of Arkansas (AIA) report that hiring problems are experienced by all companies: the biggest, the smallest, and all around the state. Firms will “do anything possible” to attract talent. Chicken processing plants will now pay \$19 an hour for new hires. Manufacturers are opening facilities in new locations to tap different labor pools. Major employers such as Tyson are experimenting with on-site childcare, a need especially for single moms, second and third-shift workers and those with infants. Businesses search everywhere for overlooked sources of labor, from veterans to ex-offenders to those completing rehab programs.

A basis for the chamber’s workforce and education efforts is the 2019 report “*Workforce Development in Arkansas: Strategies for Lifelong Learning.*” This report recommends actions for improvement in seven areas. Randy Zook notes that specific strategies vary by industry. Professional services and other office-based employers are embracing the flexibility of remote work arrangements. Companies in manufacturing, agriculture and distribution/transportation can’t do that, and are focused on growing applicant pools by reaching underutilized groups.

A high-profile success is the **Be Pro Be Proud** career awareness initiative, launched by the AIA Foundation in 2016. The campaign’s Mobile Workshop travels to schools around Arkansas and this year should cross 150,000 students reached. A second Mobile Workshop will soon ease a lengthy waiting list. The Be Pro Be Proud program has already expanded to South Carolina and Georgia, while North Carolina and Tennessee are planned to launch next. A national Be Pro Be Proud event is being held in Bentonville this summer. Other technical career efforts include:

- **Draft Day**, matching high school seniors with skilled trade opportunities at Arkansas firms;
- Two-year colleges hosting middle and high school students, with the state’s network of Career Counselors coordinating visits;
- A new 10-part series airing on Arkansas’ PBS station, aimed at parents and students and highlighting young people in technical careers from manufacturing to diesel to robotics.

The Arkansas Chamber’s new legislative agenda will be developed by the fall, concentrating on program alignment in state education and training agencies. A recent policy success was a 2019 legislation

package addressing CTE credits, credential alignment, and industry-led reviews of technical training programs at two-year schools. At the federal level, Arkansas urges attention to Perkins and other federal funds being more flexible to use for non-credit courses.

The AIA Foundation operates Be Pro Be Proud and other programs with a staff of five. Funds come from corporate support as well as grants (mostly from private philanthropy). The annual foundation budget for 2022 and 2023 will be in the \$2.5 to \$3 million range. For advocacy, three lobbyists are chamber employees funded by member dues and event sponsorships. Workforce and education activities make up perhaps 10 percent of the total Arkansas Chamber budget.

The Arkansas Chamber and AIA highlight Be Pro Be Proud as perhaps their greatest achievement, due to its rapid growth and success in bringing together business, educators, students and parents. It also has helped policy makers to see the opportunities in career awareness and retention of young talent for Arkansas.

Arizona



The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) has been the leading business advocate in the state since 1974. Among the guiding principles of ACCI is the need for Arizona to “develop a labor environment that is competitive and adapts to changing workforce needs.” It promotes policies that “educate and attract a quality workforce.”

The Arizona Chamber’s current Business Agenda highlights a number of policy principles in workforce and education, coming from its Education and Workforce Development Committee as well as from the Arizona Manufacturers Council. Key policies that these groups support:

- A.** Align the state’s education and workforce development systems with employer needs, and create funding systems that reward results.
- B.** Expand student options for dual enrollment and work-ready pathways leading to degrees and credentials that hold value in the workplace.
- C.** Focus on access to high quality education in underserved and rural communities.

- D.** In higher education, support access to post-secondary paths that build the talent pipeline for high-demand, well-paying jobs.
- E.** Encourage public-private partnerships between industry and Career & Technical Education Districts.
- F.** Ensure that workforce training is aligned with the modern manufacturing needs of the future.
- G.** Promote flexible education policies that include career exploration, hands-on experience, internships and apprenticeships.
- H.** Support initiatives for the rapid reskilling and retraining of adult learners.

ACCI is also active in policy advocacy at the federal level. It supports comprehensive immigration reform including a streamlined visa

process, an improved guest worker program, and legislation to allow undocumented youth who graduate from college or enlist in the military to apply for citizenship. It advocates for increased legal protections for the DACA population. ACCI also supports reforms to the Higher Education Act that create a more responsive, market-based framework.

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry also has a separate 501c3 Arizona Chamber Foundation. The foundation is a non-profit educational and research entity covering a broad array of topics, from water resources to industry sector growth to teacher pay. In the areas of education and workforce, the Arizona Chamber Foundation has published research on the increased use of professional certificates to drive equity and attainment improvements, as well as on the teacher talent pipeline.





California

The biggest workforce concerns of the California Chamber's business members are:

- Immediate labor shortages;
- Long-term needs for a skilled, trained workforce;
- Job training needs in addition to training provided by local workforce boards;
- Capacity and staffing to do in-house training.

CalChamber does not have a written workforce plan yet. It is creating a baseline now by helping businesses with forecasts and projections of labor needs. CalChamber is also working with employers on how to accomplish training outside of higher education institutions. For example, it supports firms in the development of non-federally registered apprenticeships.

The chamber is also working with businesses to expand paid internships for young people. Career awareness

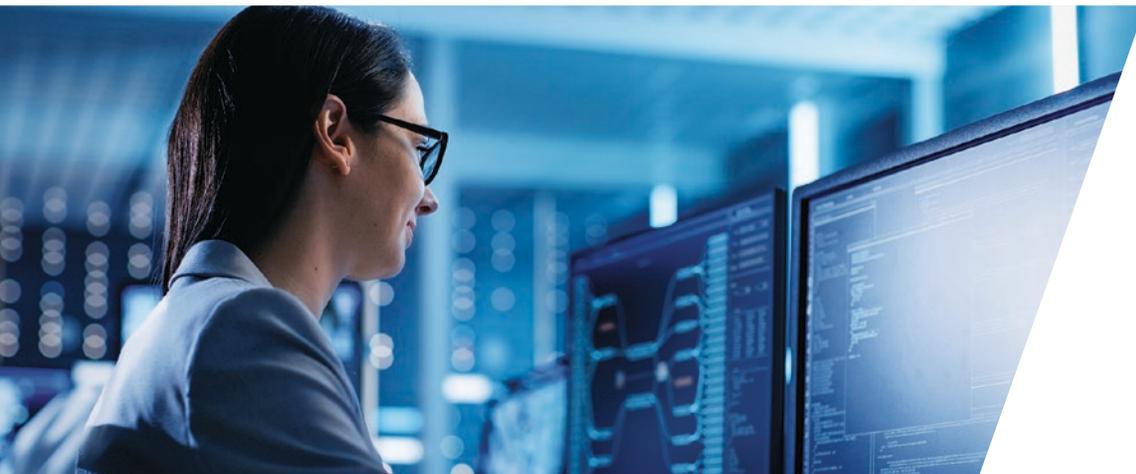
for middle school and high school students is not a major focus yet. It is active on efforts to expand labor force participation—such as in disadvantaged communities, among ex-offenders, and by improving childcare availability and cost.

CalChamber is very active in legislative advocacy, particularly in dealing with state labor law and employment mandates that threaten to drive away existing employers. The chamber hosts “The Workplace Podcast” aimed at human resources leaders. It also advocates for public school funding (especially at the higher education level), addressing high housing costs and the high cost of gasoline. The chamber sometimes partners with local and regional chambers on workforce matters, for example with the Los Angeles Area Chamber dealing with housing, apprenticeships and other training programs.

Most of the chamber's work on workforce and education is led by Loren Kaye, president of the chamber's California Foundation for Commerce and Education, a 501c3 (CalChamber is a 501c6). In addition, CalChamber employs a lobbyist who works on education policy issues. Funding generally comes from member dues.

Among the workforce and education-related successes that CalChamber points to are:

1. Loren Kaye's work on developing talent pipeline management with members in California (based on the U.S. Chamber's program), although this has not been scaled up yet.
2. Supporting parent options for education, and higher education funding.
3. Partnering with the governor's office to focus on employers' workforce needs, to create a more demand-driven workforce system.



Colorado



The Colorado Chamber of Commerce participates in the workforce and education policy areas through its advocacy program and policy council process. The chamber has supported, testified and coalesced its members around legislation such as Senate Bill 140, **Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities**, adopted in 2022. This measure allocates \$6.1 million to create incentives for employers to develop work-based learning opportunities for adults and youth. It also addresses the digital divide experienced by disengaged and under-represented groups, ramping up digital literacy classes as well as improving career navigation assistance. Finally, it emphasizes language and skills development for recent immigrants and English language learners. The Colorado Chamber will be focusing on proactive ways to address workforce shortages and skilled worker needs identified as member challenges in recent chamber surveys.

State economic development and workforce agencies point out the strengths in Colorado's workforce including high educational

attainment, a relatively young median age, and a growing population. The Colorado Department of Labor & Employment lists a fairly standard set of focus areas for its services, such as apprenticeships, internships, and veteran hiring initiatives. Colorado's apprenticeship levels (total active apprentices and new apprentices in 2021) place it in the middle of the pack nationally.

The data and strategies of the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) appear more detailed and attuned to current, demand-driven thinking in workforce development. The CWDC has substantial business representation on its board and executive committee. The council's strategies center around a) industry sector strategies; b) career pathways; c) work-based learning; d) growing higher-quality jobs; and e) expanding access to the state's talent development network.

The 2021 Talent Pipeline Report from CWDC and talentFOUND stresses shifting from degree-based hiring to skills-based hiring, enhancing access to credentials, and strengthening support industries like childcare

and behavioral health. For 2022, the report recommends higher funding for non-degree credential programs, developing transferable skills training curricula in secondary and post-secondary schools, and expanded "Fair Chance" hiring of ex-offenders with more pre-release and post-release skills training.

Finally, the Colorado Workforce Development Council has developed a Talent Equity Agenda to address prosperity gaps in the state. CWDC notes that Colorado ranks 12th nationally in overall prosperity but 37th when accounting for racial disparities between white residents and residents of color. The Talent Equity Agenda includes testing these strategies to close prosperity gaps:

1. Career navigation—with multiculturally relevant career coaching;
2. Closing the digital divide;
3. Post-secondary credential attainment;
4. Equitable hiring, compensation, and promotion practices.



Connecticut

Connecticut's immediate workforce issues are little population growth in the state, and the "silver tsunami" of retirements. Workforce has become a key issue for members since about 2015.

The main thrust of the Connecticut Business & Industry Association's (CBIA's) workforce efforts is through **ReadyCT**, the 501c3 education foundation formed in 2011. ReadyCT is focused on K-12 learning, particularly closing the achievement gap and offering career pathways. ReadyCT's strategic plan is the primary education document for CBIA, and is updated annually.

The other main related entity is the state Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), created by the 200-member Governor's Workforce Council (GWC). The OWS is led by a "workforce czar" with a long industry background (a business background is mandatory for the leadership position, not a government, academic or non-profit person). The 2020 GWC Strategic Plan also provides a good foundation for CBIA workforce activities. This plan is very career pathways focused, but includes sector strategies, work-based learning, adult upskilling and reskilling.

2021-22 planning and technical assistance from OWS to Connecticut public schools includes 1) career pathways, 2) work-based learning, 3) dual credit, and 4) digital literacy professional development. Other state initiatives include CareerConneCT, a \$70 million ARPA-funded effort launched in January 2022, where regions make collaborative grant proposals to OWS.

CBIA's **Career Pathways Initiative** for 9th-12th graders started in Hartford and is now in five cities. Paths include manufacturing and healthcare, and curriculum is totally determined by business leaders. A challenge for CBIA is that this and other ReadyCT initiatives are viewed by member firms as long-term solutions, and companies are very concerned about short-term hiring needs, making fundraising a challenge.

Policy agenda focus areas include:

- Talent attraction/growing the state's population
- Short-term training and upskilling of adults (especially the unemployed and under-employed)
- High school and college student retention (example: offering a tax credit if a business helps to pay down student debt)

- Engineering student intern credit
- Expanding the manufacturing apprenticeship tax credit
- Improved workforce training for incarcerated people
- Breaking down the K-12 bureaucracy (example: allowing adjunct teachers from manufacturing and other professions).

ReadyCT has 15 full-time employees and a budget of about \$2.5 million. Funding comes from businesses (including Raytheon and Stanley Black & Decker), philanthropy (including bank CRA funds), and a small amount from membership dues. There is also one lobbyist dedicated to K-12 education, higher education, and workforce issues. That person is a CBIA employee.

CBIA views its best accomplishment in workforce and education to be the career pathways program provided through ReadyCT. It is adding new pathways each year, and other states often contact CBIA to learn about a well-established, robust program example.

Delaware



The Delaware State Chamber is a 501c6. Its workforce arm is called The Partnership, which is a separate 501c3. The Partnership has existed for over 20 years, but had multiple aims until it was entirely revamped to focus on workforce in 2018. By then it had become clear that workforce was THE issue for Delaware employers. The Partnership does not yet have a written workforce plan. Its new board (assembled in 2021) is tasked with creating one, and work is underway.

Major Programs of The Partnership:

- **Principal for a Day**—operating since 1993, it has arranged over 1,700 school visits since 2004. Business leaders speak with high school freshman about careers in Delaware, and with seniors about post-graduation plans and in-demand jobs with their companies.
- **Superstars in Education & Training (SET)**—recognition and financial rewards for education and training programs including science teaching, technology in the classroom, and school-to-career partnerships. SET was originally for K-12 schools. However, research pointed out that high school and college graduates add three percent annually to the workforce, but 97 percent are existing adult

workers also in need of education and training. So, SET was expanded to include independent training providers, two-year and four-year colleges and universities.

- **Intern Delaware**—in its third year, Intern Delaware augments corporate summer internship programs. It provides additional programming to sell the lifestyle and culture of living in Delaware. Interns meet with the governor, representatives in Congress, and CEOs.
- **Delaware Young Professionals Network**—providing mentoring, social opportunities, speakers, and life skills content for young professionals in the state.

Next, The Partnership aims to ramp up an Apprenticeship Delaware effort. This would include a clearinghouse of apprenticeships with employers like Procter & Gamble, to raise student awareness of opportunities and link them to specific apprenticeships.

In advocacy work, the chamber's 2022 Top Priorities for Delaware is led by Workforce Development. It urges a focus on upskilling and reskilling of adult workers (noting that the state has spent significant federal funds on this since the pandemic.) It emphasizes the need to develop

employee soft skills. It urges a concentration on in-demand sectors like building trades, technology, health care, and logistics. Another priority is support for employer-led childcare initiatives.

Recent policy successes include Elevate Delaware. This initiative pays under-employed workers when they enter full-time, short-term training to improve their earning capacity. In the near future, the Delaware Chamber sees a real need to tackle the problem of benefit cliffs, which can cause employees not to seek or accept higher-paying jobs.

The chamber has a total staff of 10. The Partnership has one employee, director Helana Rodriguez, who is paid as a chamber employee. The Partnership has an annual budget of about \$100,000. It is self-funded with firms contributing to The Partnership overall, or contributing to or sponsoring a specific program like Intern Delaware. It has not yet attracted philanthropic money, and would not accept government funds. The chamber also has a full-time public affairs staffer, who along with Mike Quaranta spends a portion of his time on workforce-related lobbying.



Florida

The Florida Chamber is made up of 17 entities including the chamber's 501c6 and a foundation 501c3. These are all referred to collectively as the "*Florida Chamber Enterprise*." The chamber has placed a significant focus on workforce since 1989; it is viewed as a key long-term competitiveness issue. The chamber has produced education and workforce research since 1995's "No More Excuses." In 2017, the *Florida Jobs 2030* Report focused on five key industries. To meet its goal of becoming the world's 10th-largest economy, the *Florida 2030 Blueprint* has six pillars, the first of which is Talent Supply & Education. Its goals are focused on four zones: early learning, K-12 education achievement, postsecondary credentials, and employability skills.

The **Florida Scorecard** covers 16 talent supply and education metrics. Scorecard data is available for every county and for all to see. The Scorecard helps to tweak policy aims each year, but the primary value is raising awareness in communities statewide. It helps leaders to understand the issues better, and why the metrics are important. The chamber highlights equity gaps through the Florida Gap Map, showing third grade reading and child poverty gaps by school.

The **FL Workforce Needs Survey 1.0** in 2021 dove into occupational skill gaps. It highlighted career areas that are resilient, in-demand, prosperous, and with pathways for moving from oversupplied, low-wage careers to undersupplied, high-wage careers. FL Workforce Needs Survey 2.0—Part One is underway now. The ultimate goal is to provide employers in-house training models and access to free training and education opportunities available through partners.

Future of Work FL is a collaboration with state education and training agencies, the state Dept. of Corrections, and private foundations. It addresses the information gap for businesses, students and others about in-demand Florida jobs not requiring a four-year degree. It has a career exploration focus, with virtual tools and video testimonials. Future of Work FL aims to build public-private partnerships, awareness of resources for businesses, and bridges to the education system.

The chamber hosts an annual **Learners to Earners Workforce Solution Summit**. A key focus is on birth-to-eight school readiness, and closing the skills gap in the current and future workforce. The summit also contributes to the annual policy agenda.

In policy work, Florida believes that it accomplished 10 years of change in about three years, in areas from early learning and aligning college funding to in-demand careers. The focus now is on implementation, awareness of issues, and getting the business community engaged. Where We Stand 2022 is the chamber's policy agenda. It stresses pre-K readiness, K-12 achievement (especially third grade reading), post-secondary attainment and employability skills. Florida notes that it has spent more on political action in recent years than the U.S. Chamber.

The Chamber Enterprise doesn't view staff as segmented into areas, and it might have 40-50 people active (to varying degrees) in the workforce/education arena at any given time. It sees workforce as embedded in everything they do. Staff comes from the foundation and the main organization. Of the Enterprise's \$20 million annual budget, education and workforce might be close to half, touching all parts of the operation. Funding comes from all sources except government: philanthropy, member dues, and private sector fundraising via the 501c3.

The Florida Chamber sees the *FL 2030 Blueprint* (as measured by the Florida Scorecard) as the most impactful workforce activity. It laid the baseline for all efforts and communication.

Georgia



Workforce has always been an important issue for the Georgia Chamber and its members. In 2015 it was all about soft skills. But starting in about 2017, workforce has just “exploded” as a critical issue. Members are “losing their minds” about it these days.

The chamber released *Winning the War for Talent: Policy and Best Practice Recommendations* in January 2022. *Winning the War* presented recommendations in areas such as career pathway alignment, skills development, global talent, and accessing underutilized in-state talent. It led to the passage of bills in the state legislature that impacted at least a third of the 30 recommendations. This included a second-chance hiring bill to help ex-offenders land jobs. The chamber is making policy progress on employment of older workers (for example, allowing retired teachers to come back without impacting their pensions) and refugee hiring. It is now working hard on in-state tuition for DACA participants, affecting 15,000 students per year. Chris Clark admits that more work is needed with the business community on the hiring of people with disabilities, another large potential employee pool.

The Georgia Chamber has also issued 2022 policy statements related to talent—from early learning to K-12 education to building the overall workforce pipeline. Clark says that it is hard to get businesses to view early childhood learning or third-grade reading as priorities. The chamber has not done much lobbying at the federal level, but does view immigration as a key workforce issue and calls for national visa and immigration reform.

Among key workforce issues for members, Clark notes that career awareness—especially of skilled trades and manufacturing careers—is particularly prominent this year. The chamber is emphasizing the importance of CTE programming in K-12 schools, and marketing the promise of careers in the skilled trades to young people. Worker retention issues are also important, and more business sectors might need to consider scheduling changes. For example, nursing often still requires 12-hour shifts, while some Georgia manufacturers have changed to one shift per day that ends in the afternoon, allowing employees to pick up their kids at school.

The Georgia Chamber has typically not done workforce programming, seeing their biggest value in exploring and framing issues, providing data and projecting demand.

Most policy research efforts are led by the chamber’s foundation, a 501c3. The foundation’s president reports to the chamber’s head of public affairs. The foundation receives funding from philanthropy (including the Gates Foundation and Chan Zuckerberg Initiative) as well as from private sector fundraising efforts. The foundation has an approximate annual budget of \$1 million and a staff of four. About one-third of the budget and staff efforts are dedicated to workforce, education and training.

Chris Clark says the greatest recent success was that of the 30 recommendations published in *Winning the War for Talent* in January 2022, they were able to get the legislature to pass more than a third. The written plan gives all parties (including economic developers recruiting outside companies) something concrete to point to.



Hawaii

Chamber of Commerce Hawaii's workforce initiatives started five years ago when it received a grant from the Strada Foundation for **sector partnerships**. The Education & Workforce Development department was formed three years ago. There are now "robust" sector partnerships in 1) Engineering, 2) I.T., and 3) Healthcare. Information Technology is the newest area, created after an I.T. workforce analysis was performed in conjunction with the University of Hawaii.

After the initial grant ended, the chamber has become more proactive to expand sector partnerships. It now receives funding from the state Department of Labor, the Kamehameha Schools trust, and the Stupski Foundation. Sector partnerships represent about 50 percent of the department's work currently. The post-pandemic focus is on K-to-Career pathways.

Other workforce efforts:

1. Work-Based Learning. CoC Hawaii serves as the key intermediary with the public schools. The state has an online WBL platform, ClimbHI Bridge; the focus is getting employers

to use that tool. This is at the high school level. The chamber is also trying to bring more career awareness into the middle schools now.

2. Hawaii Is Hiring. A pandemic response for dislocated workers, adults needing reskilling and upskilling. It has evolved into a long-term effort with a full-time program manager. The focus is on jobs in in-demand sectors. The goal is to create a one-stop shop for employment and training. HIH uses an Indeed job board, offers job fairs, and partners with community college resources.

In policy and advocacy work, CoC Hawaii has one person dedicated to government affairs. A couple of current policy focus areas in workforce and education are:

A. Promising Credentials work—started with a report that CoC Hawaii did with the University of Hawaii on the most useful industry-recognized credentials. The goal is to get educators to focus on these. Legislation has been passed to incentivize schools to do so (\$1.6 million in funding), and to direct the state CTE office to collect relevant data.

B. A package to boost internships and apprenticeships. This did not pass in the latest session, and CoC Hawaii is still working to push it through.

Education & Workforce Development has a staff of three, soon growing to four. All are chamber (501c6) employees. There is a 501c3, and some grants are received through that channel. Their budget is about \$700,000. The department is 100 percent self-funded; "not a penny" comes from the chamber's general funds. The biggest challenge is achieving sustainable funding, not having to rely too heavily on one-year grants.

Keala Peters says that CoC Hawaii's greatest success has been developing sector partnerships that are recognized in Hawaii as the most effective way to involve business leaders in workforce design.

Idaho



As a small organization, the Idaho Association of Commerce & Industry (IACI) focuses on leveraging other resources to make progress on the workforce and education issues that are most important to its members. Among IACI's primary initiatives currently:

- 1. Labor Force Participation**—boosting participation through efforts such as increasing the availability of childcare. More IACI members are opening daycare facilities on-site.
- 2. Talent Pipeline Management Program**—after starting to work with this U.S. Chamber program in 2019, IACI is now ready to roll out TPM across the state in 2022 and 2023. IACI coordinates closely with partners such as the Idaho Workforce Development Council, and recently earned the governor's backing for \$50 million to fund TPM.
- 3. Diversity**—a new DEI initiative got underway last year, and IACI should unveil a strategic plan for this by the end of 2022.

The Idaho Association of Commerce & Industry also supports the major investments that the state

is making in public education. The approximately \$1 billion dedicated over the past three years includes targets such as improved teacher recruitment and retention in K-12 schools. IACI and the state are also investigating the potential to make community college completely free.

Priorities for IACI's annual policy agenda shifted increasingly toward workforce around 2017, as it became the top issue for many members. Workforce now occupies a prominent spot among the organization's legislative priorities, along with taxes, healthcare, and environmental policies. Workforce focus areas include better alignment of career pathways in Idaho, and solutions to the childcare shortage.

At the federal level, Alex LaBeau suggests that it may be time to re-think national policies impacting secondary and post-secondary education. There is a need for everyone entering the labor force to increase their skills and have easy access to promising career paths in their region. One way to accomplish this might be to incorporate more post-high school skill development programs in the high schools.

With no staff members specifically dedicated to workforce and education, IACI is adept at building coalitions. It often "drives the bus" to coordinate activities on a workforce issue, while relying on outside manpower (such as the 20 employees of the Idaho Workforce Development Council) to implement programs. IACI also hires outside contractors for research and project coordination. The U.S. Chamber Foundation has been a valuable resource, providing ready-to-use tools for workforce development. Most funding for IACI's workforce efforts comes from special fundraising and obtaining grants. The organization won a \$500,000 grant for its diversity initiative last year.

IACI lists its greatest successes in workforce and education as 1) the Talent Pipeline Management program, which is four years in the making and will be rolled out by next year (it "takes a few years to move an entire state"), and 2) helping to achieve childcare facility solutions around Idaho.



Illinois

The Illinois Chamber of Commerce is generally not active in the workforce education and training arena, instead focusing its workplace efforts on employment law and the legal and regulatory hurdles that firms face when doing business in Illinois. It has advocated for certain legislation, such as increasing job training tax credits. At the federal level, the chamber has published a policy position supporting a “comprehensive approach” to immigration reform. Key aspects of the chamber’s position on this topic include:

- A.** The need to secure America’s borders before initiating pathways to legal status for undocumented immigrants;
- B.** Work visa programs that are tied to market demand and address a wide range of labor shortages;
- C.** Creating a workable, reliable national employee verification system;
- D.** Providing a path to legal status for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants.

The State of Illinois’ primary online employment and training resource for employers and individuals is Illinois workNet. It offers a number of employer-based training programs such as incumbent worker reskilling or upskilling, on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training. Businesses can be reimbursed for up to 75 percent of new employees’ wages during the OJT period. Illinois workNet also provides guides to WIOA-approved training programs and post-secondary public and private programs approved by the state’s Community College Board and Board of Higher Education.

One area of emphasis in Illinois is apprenticeships. Apprenticeship Illinois shows more than 17,000 active apprentices and nearly 4,000 new apprentices in 2022, putting Illinois within the top dozen states for each. Increasing attention is also

being paid to student work-based learning through a new effort called the Illinois Work-Based Learning Innovation Network (I-WIN). Begun in the fall of 2020, I-WIN aims to disseminate success stories and best practices to scale up work-based learning experiences in public schools and community colleges across the state. Born during COVID, it includes both in-person and remote WBL opportunities. In its first year it served more than 50 schools.

The governor’s office is also making career pathways a priority. In 2021 it announced new investments in the Youth Career Pathways initiative for at-risk young people ages 16-24. This program increases the availability of training to develop marketable skills among those most at risk of dropping out, including youth of color and rural youth. In May of 2022 the governor signed HB 3296 into law, which improves career exploration opportunities and CTE pathways in grades six through 12.



Indiana



In the Indiana Chamber's *Indiana Vision 2025* plan from 2012, Outstanding Talent is the number one driver. Kevin Brinegar says it is the most important driver by far. *Indiana Vision 2025* gets a report card every other year (the last coming in 2021). It evaluates 67 metrics over time—to gauge internal improvement and change in Indiana's national rank. The report card informs public policy advocacy, and guides programming in education and skill development needs.

The chamber has greatly ramped up workforce activities since 2018-19, as it has been the top issue for members due to low unemployment. *Indiana Vision* and related programming are focused on education attainment, STEM learning, certifications and credentials, and adult upskilling. There is more focus now on re-entry for ex-offenders: training before release, post-release support services, and record expungement.

The Indiana Chamber created the Institute for Workforce Excellence (IWE), a separate 501c3 (separate from the chamber and its foundation), in 2017-18. The two biggest IWE programs:

1. Work & Learn Indiana—a web portal and intern matching program for college students and employers since 2006. The state

subsidizes 50 percent of wages for low-income students. High school students have been included since the legislature adopted a work experience graduation requirement about four years ago.

2. Talent Resource Navigator (TRN)—a new one-stop shop for all training-related programs, and to guide employers where to go to expand the talent pipeline and applicant pools. Customer support will be provided by staff and consultants. Largely funded by the Lilly Endowment, Talent Resource Navigator went live at the end of May 2022. The state chamber will be doing regional convenings with local and regional chambers to roll out the TRN.

Other focus areas:

- Career counseling. A chamber survey (2014-15) showed that only 30 percent of counselors' time went to career counseling. The Indiana Chamber developed *A College and Career Readiness Guide* with the state's Department of Education around 2015.
- An annual employer workforce survey (the 14th annual survey was done in 2021).

On the policy front, key legislative issues in 2022 included education and workforce development,

childcare, college and career readiness. Successes included the passage of business liability protection for young people in work-based learning, and allowing business professionals to be adjunct or part-time K-12 school faculty members. The chamber's 2022 Legislative Business Issues publication devotes ample time to CTE standards and alignment with business needs; education attainment; work experience; STEM and high-demand fields; training for high-needs citizens; and adult upskilling ("our biggest challenge as a state.")

The Institute for Workforce Excellence has an Executive Director and a total staff of six that will soon become seven. All are full-time employees of the IWE. The institute's budget is about \$4 million annually. Funding is a mix of business investments, foundations (Lilly, Lumina, Strada, Chase Bank), the legislature (\$250,000 for Work & Learn plus a wage subsidy), and revenues from activities (such as from an annual Impact Awards event, and fee for services work by staff). Kevin Brinegar and the chamber point to the 15,000 documented college student intern matches as perhaps their biggest success.



Iowa

Iowa Association of Business & Industry (ABI) President Mike Ralston has been with the organization for 17 years. When he started, Ralston says maybe 20 to 25 percent of members talked about the importance of workforce. Now, it is the top issue for 100 percent of members. Related issues like childcare and housing were almost never discussed, but are prominent now.

ABI's major workforce development program is **ELEVATE Iowa**. This advanced manufacturing-focused effort started about 10 years ago. The primary goals of ELEVATE Iowa are:

1. Career awareness for advanced manufacturing.
2. Partnering with community colleges for career education and training.
3. Job placement with Iowa ABI's member companies

ELEVATE is a partnership between the community college system, ABI's business members, and the state workforce agency. Other workforce and education programming carried out by ABI includes:

- Businesses hosting Manufacturing Days;
- Parent-student events hosted at member companies;

- Producing workforce videos for members;
- Online social media presence to reach kids and parents.

Iowa ABI measures success in these endeavors through the number of participants, social media hits, and the number of participants getting employed. Based on these metrics, ABI has made programming and outreach changes over the years. For example, according to Mike Ralston it "used to do stuff that didn't matter to kids," such as trying to communicate by direct mail. ABI has a much greater social media presence now.

Another workforce interest of Iowa ABI is labor force participation. Iowa's is already relatively very high, but anything that can be done to boost it further is important to members. The state organization sometimes partners with regional business groups such as the Greater Des Moines Partnership, which operates high quality workforce programs.

In 2022, key legislative priorities for ABI are 1) workforce, 2) tax reform, 3) infrastructure, and 4) regulatory reform. Other top education and workforce policy issues are:

- Right to work
- Skill needs for entry-level & middle-skill jobs
- Sector partnerships & career pathways
- Work-based learning
- Future Ready Iowa
- Childcare
- Workforce housing
- Foundational employability skills
- ELEVATE Iowa
- Supporting STEM & CTE

The organization is also lobbying the legislature to create incentives for childcare centers and affordable housing.

ABI staff includes one full-time dedicated workforce person for ELEVATE. The budget for workforce-related matters is about \$250,000 annually. ABI conducts separate fundraising for ELEVATE among its members, and gets some funds from the community college system and state workforce agency. ABI points to its on-site manufacturing events for parents and kids as a notable success story.

Kansas



The Kansas Chamber published *The Challenge to Compete—Kansas Workforce Strategy* in 2020. The strategy provides 20 recommendations in five key areas to improve workforce development and education alignment to support the state’s growth. Updated in 2021, the strategy advocates for:

- Expanded work experiences and work-based learning for students;
- Prioritizing talent attraction and retention;
- Increasing apprenticeships;
- Increasing the work-ready skills of Kansas adults; and
- Elevating KANSASWorks to a best-in-class statewide program.

The Challenge to Compete is a key component of the chamber’s Vision 2025 Action Plan for Kansas. It also supports chamber advocacy efforts to advance the competitiveness of the state’s business climate, expand innovation and entrepreneurship, and improve the state’s business

infrastructure. The Kansas Chamber is also the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers, providing resources and support related to manufacturing workforce policies and programs through the Kansas Manufacturing Council.

Since the publication of *The Challenge to Compete*, the chamber’s workforce strategy advocacy efforts have helped address challenges and develop opportunities over the last two years, in areas such as:

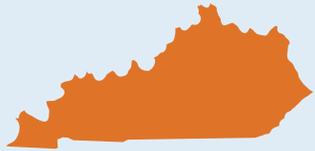
- A.** Alignment of resources and programs within the Kansas Department of Education (particularly CTE instruction) with the state’s high demand, high wage job opportunities and needs;
- B.** Addressing the legal issues associated with providing students internships and other work experiences; and

- C.** Supporting funding for apprenticeship programming through the Department of Commerce, generating an increase in apprenticeships and job placements.

Priorities in the chamber’s 2022 legislative agenda include pushing for a Registered Apprenticeship tax credit and an improved K-12 computer science curriculum.

The Kansas Chamber has an educational foundation that supports programs, research and educational opportunities. The foundation supports the chamber’s research, strategy development, and general work in these areas but does not have dedicated workforce development staff. The foundation is largely funded through the Kansas Chamber’s general revenues.





Kentucky

The Kentucky Chamber first released its *Leaky Bucket* report—identifying areas where state spending was harming the state’s ability to fund education—in 2010. In 2017, the chamber elected to elevate the role it played in addressing education and workforce development challenges. The Chamber Foundation’s Workforce Center was then launched as the first of its kind in the nation. The Workforce Center strives to build a workforce that is responsive to the needs of business. It focuses on three core program areas: addressing talent pipeline issues; second chance populations; and forging career connections.

- **Kentucky’s Talent Pipeline:** Kentucky was selected by the U.S. Chamber Foundation as one of three states to pilot implementation of a statewide Talent Pipeline Management program. The state chamber partners closely with the Kentucky Cabinet for Education and Workforce Development for the Talent Pipeline initiative. In this program, the chamber’s foundation convenes businesses to create employer-led industry collaboratives that align talent supply chains with education and workforce development systems.

- **Workforce Recovery Program:** The Chamber Foundation partners with Kentucky Comeback to provide the Kentucky Transformational Employment Program (KTEP). Programs in this effort are focused on improving employability and long-term recovery for residents impacted by substance abuse and involvement with the justice system.
- **Bus to Business:** A statewide initiative to connect students with employers, showing students the career pathways available in their own communities.

The foundation provides additional programs to support the focused work of its Workforce Center, such as:

- A. Kentucky Talent Hub—connecting job seekers to jobs;
- B. Leadership Institute for School Principals—executive-level leadership training;
- C. Kentucky Business Education Roundtable—focusing on education attainment and school quality;
- D. The Center for Diversity Equity and Inclusion—focusing on systemic transformation;
- E. Kentucky Civics Bee—part of a national student civics competition.

The Kentucky Chamber’s legislative agenda addresses workforce priorities such as: policy and regulations that negatively affect employers and job seekers; the state’s low workforce participation rate; and critical funding and credentialing gaps for education-to-career system partners. The chamber has been successful at reducing liability for employers hiring justice-involved and recovering people, encouraging reskilling and retraining, and championing an innovative, employer-led approach to childcare cost assistance.

The chamber’s foundation has 16 employees. This includes two dedicated to Workforce Center management, seven coordinating Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) work, and two dedicated to Workforce Recovery programs. The foundation is supported through public and private sector funding. Public sector funds include program funding and legislative allocations to support the Workforce Center’s TPM and Recovery programs. The foundation also receives significant private sector and philanthropic foundation funding to support its work in education, career pathways, research and data collection. The foundation has carried out workforce programming for five years, with demonstrable outcomes in assisting employers and job seekers.

Louisiana



Louisiana Association of Business & Industry (LABI) members report major workforce challenges in Louisiana. The state economy is heavily dependent on tourism, which was especially hard hit by COVID, but workforce problems exist across all sectors. For example, addressing healthcare workforce needs (particularly in nursing) is a serious challenge. Lower labor force participation, difficulty getting workers to return to the job, and high quit rates are acute issues, along with the surging wages and benefits needed to attract employees.

Current areas of focus in education and workforce for LABI include K-12 education reform, advocating for innovation with corporate charter schools, and several literacy initiatives. Other efforts to connect the future workforce with good paying, in-demand jobs include dual enrollment and “reverse transfer” programs. (Reverse transfer refers to two-year associate degree completion for adults.) LABI is also cultivating a closer relationship with the state’s Board of Regents to help businesses understand and take advantage of relevant four-year degree programs. LABI established a business roundtable with the Board of Regents, and the group plans

an outreach effort to parents and students about promising in-state career opportunities.

LABI is developing training proposals based on the national **Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships** model, to build the workforce in infrastructure-related occupations. To achieve this, Business Leaders United in the state makes efforts to reach and serve people under-represented in the workforce—those in poverty, lacking education and training, and ex-offenders. LABI helped to pass legislation that limits liability for firms that hire returning citizens, provides mentoring, and launches pilot training programs in correctional facilities.

A notable past success for LABI was the reorganization of the state’s Department of Labor into the **Louisiana Workforce Commission** (LWC). After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, many workers left the state and did not return. Borrowing a successful model from Texas, the new LWC in 2007 became less of an unemployment office and a more demand-driven workforce system focused on job placement. Unfortunately, LABI has seen a halt in the LWC’s progress under the current governor’s administration.

Another long-term workforce success has been incumbent worker training. This started as a \$6 million initiative in the mid-1990s, and grew to be funded at \$50 million while adding a separate training track for smaller businesses. Recent funding is approximately \$35 million.

At the federal level, LABI staff believes that WIOA needs to provide better state oversight of WIBs. Too often, local appointees create a “club-like” atmosphere lacking in professionalism and effectiveness, and WIOA doesn’t provide states with sufficient carrots or sticks to improve WIB performance and outcomes.

LABI has one staff member dedicated to education and workforce policy. It has a foundation that is not directly involved in workforce. Most funding for advocacy work comes from tiered member dues, with some additional fundraising to support operations.

LABI sees the creation of the Louisiana Workforce Commission as its greatest workforce-related success to date. Issues of labor force participation, skill development, and poverty reduction remain among the greatest challenges for Louisiana.



Maine

The Maine State Chamber has a separate 501c3 Education Foundation that focuses on workforce and education policy priorities in the state. The chamber also has a Workforce & Education Policy Committee that monitors policies relating to career awareness and learning in important state industries such as construction, manufacturing, healthcare and forest products. In Maine's 2022 legislative session, numerous bills dealt with these education and training issues:

- Pre-K/early childhood development;
- Career and technical education (CTE);
- Early college;
- Training for high-demand sectors;
- Rural business workforce recruitment;
- Workforce development for the hospitality and food & beverage industries.

The Maine State Chamber has also been a member of the *Making Maine Work* collaboration since 2009. *Making Maine Work's* 2018 publication was entitled "Critical Investments for the Maine Economy." Workforce-related recommendations from this report included:

- A.** Market Maine as a career destination similar to the state's successful Visit Maine tourism campaign.
- B.** Offer college tuition incentives and student debt forgiveness to encourage young people to learn, live and work in Maine.
- C.** Boost labor force participation among those that have historically been difficult to engage.
- D.** Attract more foreign immigrants and help municipalities integrate them into communities.
- E.** Make workforce expansion a top state government goal.

F. Help more adult workers to earn a credential.

G. Strengthen diverse career pathways across the state.

The Maine State Chamber partners on workforce and education programs as well. Campus Career Connect provides professional mentors for college students with disabilities, to help them reach their career goals. Campus Career Connect helps with job readiness skills, networking and the job search process. The chamber has also joined with the Manufacturing Institute's national **Dream It. Do It.** program. Dream It. Do It. informs parents, students and teachers about careers in modern manufacturing.



Maryland



Much of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce's workforce-related efforts are carried out through the Maryland Chamber Foundation. This 501c3 was founded in 1987 and reignited in 2017 as part of a renewed emphasis on the chamber's research and educational objectives. Foundation research is intent on driving solutions in education, talent pipeline, and workforce development. It seeks long-term, collaborative innovation that looks past the "next four years" to address Maryland's competitiveness over "the next four generations."

Initiatives of the Maryland Chamber Foundation include a **Teacher Externship Program**. This four-week summer program pairs high school teachers with leading businesses in the state that provide teachers with hands-on experience related to the subjects they teach. In its fourth year, the Teacher Externship Program strives to help teachers improve their curricula and demonstrate the hard and soft skills their students need to succeed in the workplace. Participating teachers receive a stipend from the foundation, in addition to being eligible for continuing development credits. Host companies include AstraZeneca and Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE).

The foundation is also active in providing an Equity & Inclusion webinar series in partnership with BGE.

The Maryland Chamber's standing member committees include an Education & Workforce Development Committee. Key issues for this committee include a) Apprenticeships; b) Skills Development; c) Talent Pipeline; and d) Entrepreneur Development. This committee's work helps to drive the chamber's legislative priorities. Three critical education and workforce development issues in 2022 are:

1. Apprenticeship and Intern Tax Credits—to expand the pool of apprenticeships and CTE opportunities.
2. Apprenticeship Statutory Definition—to expand the definition of qualifying apprenticeships, capturing more potential workers and increasing the number of employers who can access related incentives.
3. Second Chance Employment—to expand educational attainment for currently and formerly incarcerated residents.

The Maryland Chamber also made increased childcare availability a top business priority in the 2022 state legislative session. The chamber supported legislation to incentivize opening of new childcare facilities and expansion of existing ones, to "help more Marylanders to get back to work" and thus address the broader workforce shortage. Notable successes in the 2022 session were the establishment of a Child Care Capital Support Revolving Loan Fund and improvements to the Child Care Scholarship Program.

At the federal level, the Maryland Chamber emphasizes funding to increase apprenticeship programs and other training for in-demand careers. This includes reauthorization of the Perkins CTE program.



Massachusetts

Associated Industries of Massachusetts (AIM) has seen workforce issues become even more critical for their members since COVID. Workforce-related challenges are now “at a peak” across the state. One example is a mid-sized manufacturer in central Massachusetts that currently has 80 vacant positions from a total workforce of 200.

A top priority for AIM is addressing concerns over the high percentage of women—especially women of color—who left the workforce during COVID and have not returned. AIM developed the **Pink Slip** initiative as one solution. Pink Slip is centered around businesses sharing best practices that enable and encourage women to return to the workplace, such as flexibility in work and meeting schedules, maintaining benefit programs for those who temporarily leave the workforce, and more resources for employees who are caregivers. Pink Slip partners with a number of workforce-related organizations around Massachusetts to increase its effect. These joint efforts have also resulted in advocacy for enhanced domestic violence protections in the workplace.

To press for K-12 public school reforms and other education-related advocacy, AIM teams up with the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE), of which AIM was a founding partner. Current advocacy priorities for MBAE and AIM include improved high school career pathways, making it easier to obtain industry-recognized credentials, and eliminating achievement gaps. AIM is also fighting to pass a 50 percent training tax credit when training results in certification through the Applied Manufacturing Technology Pathway Certification Program.

Other AIM policy priorities more generally address Massachusetts’ ability to be competitive in business and the economy, such as fighting a proposed tax increase that would hit S corporations and residents in the state.

Associated Industries of Massachusetts does have a 501c3 foundation, one that AIM is working to reinvigorate now. The foundation has previously focused on research studies related to energy and other industries important to the Massachusetts economy, but AIM is expanding foundation research in the areas of workforce and education.

All staffers are AIM employees, and most activities are funded by member dues. Funds are solicited separately for the foundation, and special efforts such as the Pink Slip initiative are supported by business sponsorships.

AIM points to the Pink Slip initiative as an effort that helps to set it apart among trade associations. Now in the third year since COVID began, businesses are still experiencing huge gaps trying to fill vacant positions. Pink Slip illustrates how AIM works collectively with its member businesses and state policymakers to find and broadcast solutions for improving the quantity and quality of workforce talent.

Michigan



The Michigan Chamber, in its role as the statewide business advocacy organization, has adopted a legislative agenda that prioritizes education and workforce readiness. Three primary areas of focus include:

1. Leading efforts to narrow the skills gap, promote workforce development and increase skilled trade opportunities;
2. Championing initiatives to increase student achievement;
3. Supporting the continuation and growth of high quality traditional and charter schools.

Additionally, the Michigan Chamber is advocating for a statewide school assessment to compile data on the expected student learning loss during COVID-19, to support the development of targeted strategies to address this concern. The chamber's ongoing business advocacy agenda also contains workforce-related legislation that affects the ability of businesses to effectively recruit and retain talent.

These include several legislative bills that address childcare, affordable housing and workforce training grants. Examples of these current focus areas:

- Support for increased funding for the state's Going PRO Talent Fund, which employers can access for short-term upskilling and reskilling of existing workers and new hires, with the training leading to a recognized, transferable skill credential;
- Multiple bills would help local governments to address housing supply and affordability by expanding programs and creating new tools for the rehab of existing housing and development of new units.

The Michigan Chamber does not currently deliver workforce programming itself. It does provide contract services for the Michigan Energy Workforce Development Consortium (MEWDC). This consortium is an industry-led partnership with more than 50

representatives from industry, education, workforce, and veterans. MEWDC's strategic priorities include talent attraction and retention, identification of workforce needs, alignment of education and training resources, and raising awareness of the industry's growth and career opportunities. The chamber provides a dedicated staff person and workforce lobbyist expertise.

A newly-formed foundation provides funding for research projects including workforce gap analysis, strategy development and education and training. The foundation does not yet have any full-time, dedicated employees. Financial resources to support the workforce-related work of the Michigan Chamber are provided through general chamber revenues and grants.

The Michigan Chamber is advocating for a statewide school assessment to compile data on the expected student learning loss during COVID-19.



Minnesota

The Minnesota Chamber has always had a policy focus on workforce-related issues, primarily on education policy. More recently, in the last five years or so, there's been increased emphasis on workforce development and early childhood learning. With the state "cluttered" by numerous organizations trying to do similar things, the Minnesota Chamber aims to be different by putting businesses at the forefront of workforce and education solutions.

The Minnesota Chamber Foundation (established in 1984) has three main focus areas, of which workforce is one. The foundation's **Center for Workforce Solutions** (CWS) was established about six years ago. CWS aims to attract grant funds for workforce issues.

A leading foundation program that strives to provide private-sector solutions to building the workforce is BEN, or the **Business Education Network**. BEN helps students to understand career paths within their own region of the state by working closely with local chambers. Different regions of the state might focus on healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, or food and agriculture. BEN first provided local chambers with seed money to initiate programming. The Minnesota

Chamber says it has had "great" relationships with local chambers over the past 20 years, and now has 25 to 30 BEN programs operating around the state.

Other current initiatives:

- A.** Diversity—especially DEI training assistance for small and mid-sized firms. The chamber takes a broad view of diversity, including efforts to increase workforce participation among second-chance hires, the disabled, and women who left the workforce during COVID or are underrepresented in certain industries.
- B.** Attracting and retaining foreign-born students in Minnesota.

The chamber foundation released *Minnesota:2030* in 2021, and it will guide the chamber's activities over the next four years. Talent attraction efforts will emphasize the state's relative affordability. For existing residents there is a focus on getting people back into the workforce post-pandemic, upskilling and reskilling. Top policy issues include career readiness, work-based learning, the literacy achievement gap, and repealing or retooling the state's payroll tax, intended to help displaced workers but now described as a "slush fund."

At the federal level, the chamber urges immigration reform. It is striving to improve occupational credentialing for immigrants in the state. WIOA reauthorization is another important topic.

Staffers are chamber employees. The DEI position has a dedicated staffer who could take on a broader workforce role over time. Lauryn Schothorst handles both workplace policy (employment law) as well as workforce policy. The chamber's annual budget for workforce and education is \$300,000 to \$400,000. Policy work is funded through the regular chamber budget, while the foundation's research work is sponsored by business and philanthropy. The DEI initiative has been funded for the next three years through a special member fundraising effort.

Activities that help the Minnesota Chamber stand out in the workforce arena include 1) its focus on immigration and the value of immigrants to the economy; 2) the successful partnerships of BEN (Business Education Network); and 3) economic research such as in *Minnesota:2030* that lays out the path for future workforce strategy.

Mississippi



The Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) is the state Chamber of Commerce for Mississippi. MEC authored the recent economic development report, *Securing Mississippi's Future*, which cited the lack of qualified workers as the single biggest issue across the state. The report identified key areas that needed to be addressed to ensure that all communities in Mississippi have workforce solutions for their residents and employers. The critical focus areas included:

- The need for greater focus on soft skills in high schools, the lack of which affects employers' ability to find work-ready talent.
- The need for greater collaboration between the partners in each community's education-to-career system.
- The need to address the bias of educators and parents regarding jobs and careers that do not require a two-year degree or higher.

The recommended solutions in the report emphasized strategies to address:

1. Career and technical education (CTE);
2. Career readiness certificates;
3. Career pathways; and
4. The stigma of not going to college.

To support these solutions, MEC became the leading advocate for the creation of a statewide Office of Workforce Development, now known as **Accelerate Mississippi**. Officially established in 2020, this office is now tasked with overseeing statewide workforce strategy, coordinating efforts and resources. Accelerate Mississippi works closely with the eight regional workforce ecosystems across the state. Their focus is connecting all individuals with high-paying careers and employers with the talent they need to be successful.

MEC continues to support the state's workforce development efforts through a strong legislative agenda that addresses career and technical education, support for teacher pay, and relaxed regulations for hiring justice-involved individuals.

MEC currently has two foundations. The Public Education Forum (PEF) has been in existence since 1989, and manages the Mississippi Scholars Program, which connects eighth-grade students with business leaders to support and inspire their journey to a meaningful career. Additionally, MEC provides support to students and teachers through the M.B. Swayze Foundation's STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Recognition) program, providing significant scholarship funding as a means to increase educational attainment across the state. STAR has recognized outstanding students and their teachers for more than 45 years.

The Mississippi Economic Council employs two full-time staff dedicated to these programs. In early 2022, PEF received a four-year, \$1 million grant to focus on raising the state's education attainment rate. MEC will be hiring a full-time person to administer the grant.



Missouri

The Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry published *Workforce 2030* as a call to action to address workforce issues in the state, as workforce development has emerged as the most important and effective tool in the competition for jobs and investment. The plan identified six key areas of focus, each with multiple execution strategies and related best practices. The key target areas:

1. Maximize Business Engagement
2. Focus on Improving Worker Skills
3. Prioritize Regional Sector Strategies
4. Increase Career Awareness
5. Attract and Retain More Talent
6. Improve Communication for All Stakeholders.

The Missouri Chamber supports the *Workforce 2030* strategy with an aggressive Public Policy Agenda that includes support for funding in education and education infrastructure, a comprehensive approach to upskilling and retraining, and opportunities for business engagement with the workforce

strategies. Specific support this past year on the topic of childcare as a workforce and economic development issue resulted in the creation of a \$20 million fund to provide grants to employers who set up in-house daycare facilities.

The chamber's workforce strategies are supported through its foundation, with a heavy emphasis on apprenticeships, work-based learning and career awareness in leading industry sectors. In 2020, the Missouri Chamber Foundation was awarded a \$6 million U.S. Department of Labor grant to expand **Tech Apprenticeships** that is expected to produce over 5,000 new technology apprentices by 2024. To date, six tech companies have hired over 1,500 new apprentices through this initiative. The foundation also provides the Apprenticeship Connect program, which matches Missouri apprentices with work opportunities across the state.

The foundation oversees the **Show-Me Careers Educator Experience** with industry-specific externships for educators, highlighting the skills and

mindset required for their students to be successful at work. Since 2018 it has operated Intern Connect as a bridge between employers and the state's future workforce. The foundation's collaboration with the Mathematics & Science Coalition produces an annual STEM Signing Day to raise awareness of STEM pathways beyond high school. The Chamber Foundation is also collaborating with Missouri's Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative, a \$1 million effort to help employers increase support for employees with substance abuse disorders.

The Missouri Chamber's foundation has three dedicated employees and contracts with the chamber for operational support. Both private and public sector funds support programming. Public funding includes state and federal grants for designated programs. Private sector funding is provided by corporate donors to support the chamber's efforts in workforce development.

Workforce development has emerged as the most important and effective tool in the competition for jobs and investment.

Montana



The Montana Chamber of Commerce developed a 10-year strategic plan, *Envision 2026*, that represented the priorities of the Montana business community in 2016. The plan identified four objectives that became the four pillars of the chamber's work and focus. One of those pillars was a focus on Workforce Readiness. In this pillar, the chamber recognized the importance of a collaborative effort to addressing the challenges impacting both workers and business. To address this, the Montana Chamber concentrated on two key initiatives:

1. Creating an appropriately educated and skilled workforce to specifically meet the needs of a growing economy; and
2. Engaging with students and schools.

Halfway through the 10-year plan, the chamber has ramped up its efforts to meet these objectives in the Workforce Readiness pillar through 1) legislative advocacy, 2) programs, and 3) data collection. Outcomes in these areas include assisting businesses in establishing qualified work-based learning programs for

job shadowing, apprenticeships and paths to employment with connected funding opportunities. It has assisted students in earning college credits through employment and dual enrollment programs by strengthening Career & Technical Education (CTE) and work-based learning.

The Montana Chamber, in collaboration with its foundation, conducted a comprehensive Workforce Development Survey of employers and business leaders to identify key challenges and solutions for workforce readiness. The chamber uses this survey to qualify and quantify the challenges that businesses are facing, effectively communicate the needs of the business community to education and government leaders, to identify and scale employability solutions, and instill entrepreneurial and economic principles in youth.

The chamber's legislative priorities reflect the needs identified in the Workforce Development Survey and have addressed specific issues such as CTE funding formulas and

workers compensation requirements for minors, as part of larger efforts to align work-based learning and CTE initiatives in educational institutions.

The Montana Chamber's Foundation supports two of the key pillars of the *Envision 2026* strategy: Workforce Readiness and Entrepreneurship. The foundation has two dedicated staff that oversee programming and funding for Youth Entrepreneurs and The Prospects. The Youth Entrepreneurs program is now offered in 85 schools in 78 Montana communities, and seeks to assist high school students in developing soft skills and an entrepreneurial mindset. The chamber has plans to expand this program to middle school youth and to create a teacher continuing education initiative. The Prospects program is a virtual statewide entrepreneurship competition that provides scholarships and cash prizes for high school students with innovative ideas.



Nebraska

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry has an active policy agenda guided by twelve Policy Councils that represent multiple industry sectors, and specific policy areas. Workforce development is a key component of the work of the councils and heavily influences the chamber's broad advocacy agenda.

Recent efforts have supported increased funding across the state budget for programs that address apprenticeships, housing, childcare facilities, a customized job training fund, tax incentives and expanding childcare assistance for working families. The chamber was instrumental in directing nearly \$700 million in state ARPA funding to key areas that included workforce development, education and talent attraction initiatives. Additionally, it supported expanding Nebraska's high skill, high demand, high wage (H3) career scholarship program.

The chamber is working with *Blueprint Nebraska*, the statewide economic development plan, to

build partnerships that will focus on growing advanced manufacturing, including workforce initiatives that attract more workers by scaling internship and apprenticeship programs, enhancing training and customized workforce solutions and boosting STEM talent among graduates.

The Nebraska Chamber operates a unique collaboration between industry leaders and Nebraska state government for alignment and resourcing in the state's manufacturing sector. Known as the **NE Manufacturing Alliance**, industry leaders in partnership with the Nebraska departments of Economic Development, Education and Labor work to enhance programs and communication strategies to attract students to modern manufacturing. These include:

- NAM's **Dream It. Do It.** which provides student awareness, exposure and experiences in manufacturing;

- The Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership offering consulting and customized training to small and medium sized manufacturers; and
- WiM Nebraska, the Women in Manufacturing—Nebraska Chapter.

The chamber is beginning new initiatives in collaboration with the State Department of Education to integrate the workforce needs of business into the education system and create a more aligned education-to-career system.

The Nebraska Chamber created a foundation in 2020 to support research and programming in partnerships with industry leaders. The foundation's research includes a Nebraska Economic & Workforce Dashboard providing current data to support the state's workforce strategies. The foundation is funded solely through the chamber membership and supports chamber staff in the related program areas.

Nevada



In the absence of a state-level chamber organization, the Vegas Chamber is Nevada's largest business support organization. The Vegas Chamber advocates for and tracks legislative progress in a number of education and workforce topics. Important issues that it pushed for in 2021 included:

- A.** Greater business participation in design of CTE programs and curricula;
- B.** Better alignment of state workforce development and training efforts with employer needs;
- C.** Making dual credit enrollment at community colleges and universities easier for high school students;
- D.** Easing eligibility for adults to obtain a high school diploma.

Many state-level workforce development efforts are led by the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development, or GOED. Leaders of GOED note that two key goals are breaking down the workforce and education silos common in state agencies, and supporting Regional Development Authorities around the state to design programs that address each region's different needs. Notable GOED initiatives are:

- **LEAP**—Learn & Earn Advanced-Career Pathways. In developing career pathways throughout the state, LEAP aims to ensure 1) strong employer engagement; 2) pathways are rooted in state CTE standards; 3) credits are fully integrated to transfer from high school to college and university; 4) qualifications obtained are recognized and applicable across an industry; and 5) lifelong learning is enabled through easy on and off ramps.
- **WINN**—Workforce Innovations for the New Nevada. WINN helps businesses to expand or locate in Nevada by creating and funding industry-specific training programs. Companies looking to add workers can tap into an existing industry partnership or work with providers to custom-design a new program. WINN has funded \$11 million in workforce training through Nevada colleges and universities so far, in a tremendous range of fields: from cybersecurity and the internet of things, to genetics counseling, to diesel technology and commercial driver license. An innovative use of WINN funds was Western Nevada College's creation of a mobile industrial technology lab that can be carried to rural locations in its six-county service area. The \$800,000 project combined private sector contributions and foundation grants with WINN funding.
- **SANDI**—Supporting and Advancing Nevada's Dislocated Individuals. SANDI obtained a \$13.8 million federal grant to support workers in hospitality and other industries during the pandemic. SANDI led to the creation of 90 short-term credential programs at every community college, with over \$3 million in tuition support for participants.
- **Apprenticeship Expansion.** Nevada has brought a successful apprenticeship model for construction trades into healthcare and IT apprenticeship programs.
- **Labor Supply Study.** In the wake of COVID disruptions, GOED commissioned a labor supply study to measure Nevada's available workforce. A key finding is that Nevada has a large subset of the total workforce identified as underemployed. These 300,000 workers have the interest and abilities to obtain a better job if offered.



New Hampshire

The Business and Industry Association (BIA) in New Hampshire has a number of public policy priorities related to workforce and education. Among BIA's key positions in the workforce arena:

- Aligning education and training with the specific skills needed by NH businesses;
- Increasing awareness of careers in manufacturing, technology, healthcare and skilled trades;
- Strengthening early childhood supports including quality, affordable childcare;
- Stressing high standards for competency based education with hands-on learning and robust assessment;
- Funding and policies to reduce the cost of post-secondary education for in-state students;
- Supporting public and private incentives to keep graduates in New Hampshire.

Related policy positions include promoting diversity, equity and inclusion and a welcoming environment that will enhance the state's "cultural fabric, economic growth, global competitiveness,

and overall prosperity." BIA also stresses the availability and affordability of housing for the workforce, opposing measures that limit workforce housing. Finally, BIA supports sufficient funding for public education and targeting school funds "to cities and towns most in need." It supports a constitutional amendment to accomplish this goal if needed.

BIA also boasts a robust **School to Career Pathway** program, featuring online profiles of 14 success stories where businesses have connected with students and schools. Many firms are involved with internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and facility tours. Some sponsor Women in Technology, robotics, and other STEM enrichment efforts. Others help with curriculum design and CTE support in high schools and at community colleges. They've helped create entirely new programs such as a 12-week Medical Assistant certificate offering. Other School to Career Pathway initiatives include teacher STEM training and workplace awareness, and paid professional development for existing employees.

Additional state-level workforce development efforts in New Hampshire:

- NH Sector Partnerships Initiative, coordinating \$1 million in funds to help fill workforce gaps in the construction, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and technology sectors.
- WorkReadyNH, an online and independent work program where individuals can build key workplace and soft skills. Graduates earn a WorkReadyNH Certificate and National Career Readiness Certificate.
- ApprenticeshipNH, a \$7.9 million federally-funded initiative to expand Registered Apprenticeships in eight leading sectors, in cooperation with NH community colleges.
- NH Alliance for College & Career Readiness, formed in 2018 to guide efforts for meeting the statewide goal of 65 percent of adults having a post-high school certification by 2025.
- College Graduate Incentive Program (GRIP), created by the legislature in 2019. GRIP markets job opportunities and related incentives by NH companies that offer graduates an incentive of at least \$1,000 per year for the first four years of employment.

New Jersey



The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, in its role as the statewide business advocacy organization, has actively supported the state's engagement and increased funding for workforce and talent development initiatives as a critical piece of its economic development strategy. The chamber's recent focus has prioritized upskilling and retooling the existing workforce to meet the current needs of business. Additionally, the chamber is championing a greater emphasis in career pathways and work-based learning in schools across the state.

The New Jersey Chamber has a robust foundation that is dedicated to preparing underserved student and young adult populations for post-secondary education and success in the workforce. Through partnering with national and in-state non-profits, K-12 schools, community-based organizations, institutes of higher education, workforce development

boards and government agencies, and other strategic stakeholders, it supports programs that prepare young adults of all abilities for the increasingly competitive worlds of college and careers.

Through its flagship program, **Jobs for America's Graduates New Jersey**, the foundation aims to prevent high-school dropouts while guiding those students toward full-time jobs or post-secondary education.

Since 2012, students participating in Jobs for America's Graduates New Jersey have graduated at rates of 92 percent to 100 percent - more than double the rate of their school peers. Graduation rates alone don't tell the entire story, though. JAG New Jersey students typically find employment at more than double the rate of their peers, and they report changes in attitude towards education, increased attendance and optimism about their futures.

Additional programs provided through the New Jersey Chamber's foundation include the LearnDoEarn online business simulation app; Almost Real Products, providing students experience with a real online job application process through a fictitious company; and internship connections.

The foundation currently has two full time employees dedicated to workforce development initiatives. Financial resources to support the work of the chamber are provided through corporate foundations and fundraising, and supplemented by philanthropic grants.





New Mexico

The New Mexico Chamber of Commerce has eight key Priority Issue Areas that are the focus of its work. One of those areas is Education and Workforce Development. In this area, the chamber emphasizes career exposure, soft and technical skills aligned with high-demand industry sectors. To support this priority, the New Mexico Chamber has developed a broad range of funding and policy initiatives. These policy initiatives fall into three specific areas:

- 1. PROGRAMMING:** Identifying and supporting initiatives that affect the education-to-career outcomes for students and employers, including:
 - Creation of cooperative business-education employability programs
 - Increased education attainment initiatives
 - Sustaining current CTE programs and existing collaborations between providers and industries targeted by Economic Development.
- 2. STAFFING:** Providing educational institutions with the quality staffing required for retaining talent, including:
 - Quality childcare and education initiatives to retain staff
 - Streamlined licensure for educators
 - A statewide leadership program for school administrators and staff.
- 3. FUNDING:** Providing much needed resources to:
 - Support the preK-20 education system to address COVID-19 issues
 - Support the Early Childhood Trust Fund
 - Increase aid for students in STEM, Skilled Trades, and Healthcare.

The State of New Mexico regularly engages with the chamber to assist in resolving workforce development system issues in regions throughout the state. The New Mexico Chamber has partnered with the state to provide collaborative solutions to assist under-performing areas, better alignment and business support.

Additionally, the chamber recently created a foundation to further its work to support high demand industry sector workforce solutions. Specifically, the chamber is looking to provide direct programming by participating in **Be Pro Be Proud**, a program operated by several chambers to provide communities throughout their states with mobile labs to promote career awareness in professional trades. The New Mexico Chamber applied for significant multi-year state grants to support this initiative. The foundation does not currently have dedicated employees and is funded through fundraising efforts by the chamber.

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New York



The Business Council of New York State advocates for education, workforce development, childcare, and early childhood initiatives and supports several workforce programs under its affiliate The Public Policy Institute of New York State (PPI). Making headlines in April 2022 was Governor Hochul's announcement to create a New York State Office of Strategic Workforce Development. The \$350 million initiative includes funding for the new office and for regional and sector-based strategies to support employer-driven, high-skilled training programs.

The Business Council directly supports several workforce development programs with staff and funding through The Public Policy Institute of New York State.

- The Business Council is part of the P-TECH Leadership Council which oversees the **New York State Pathways in Technology** (NYS P-TECH) program. P-TECH is a public-private partnership that prepares New York students for high-skills jobs of the future in technology, manufacturing, healthcare, and finance. There are approximately 40 P-TECH programs in the state. The Business Council funds the director position of the P-TECH Leadership Council through its 501c3. The program started in 2012.

- In 2019, The Business Council and partners Metrix Learning and SUNY Polytechnic Institute launched **Skillup® AMP** (Advanced Manufacturing Performance). This is an online platform for job seekers, job postings, and skills training information. The council noted it has been a struggle to get people onto the platform. There was an uptick during the pandemic, but usage has not continued to increase.
- Through a partnership with the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council, The Business Council launched the nationally recognized **Certified Production Technician** program in 2018. The council aims for it to be a statewide, scalable workforce development program.

A new part of the council's efforts to spotlight workforce solutions is the New York State Workforce Innovation Awards. In 2022, The Business Council will make four workforce innovation awards for P-12, Higher Education, Non-Profits, and Business.

One foundation for The Business Council's workforce development policy agenda is a 2021 survey undertaken to assess needs coming out of the pandemic. It is used to ensure that businesses are at the table, driving solutions for education and workforce challenges. As stated

in the council's 2022 priority agenda for workforce development, New York "needs to expedite deployment of already authorized 'flexible' workforce development funding" and to implement "new, employer-oriented workforce development" programs. It further calls for the state to "provide new funding for regional chambers of commerce... to develop sector-based training programs that meet the needs of multiple employers." "This would be a huge benefit particularly to smaller companies that may not have the hiring needs to support a training program alone...."

The Business Council is part of several policy coalitions devoted to early childhood development, school readiness, K-12 equity and achievement for all students. These include Raising New York and the New York Equity Coalition. The Business Council has one full-time position for workforce development. Programming is supported by other staff positions. Its workforce development budget is approximately \$100,000-\$200,000 per year. However, most programs are funded out of PPI, which is supported by philanthropic funding.



North Carolina

In this fast-growing state, workforce challenges due to a lack of alignment between education and training institutions and in-demand jobs were evident pre-COVID. The rapid pace of business innovation has not been matched by institutional adaptation to changing workforce demands. Although the North Carolina community college system has always been “great,” K-12 school responsiveness is “sluggish.” The pandemic just “put a bright light” on these issues. The recent “Great Reassessment” in the workforce has highlighted difficulties in providing the quantity and quality needed to keep attracting investment and good jobs to the state.

Meanwhile, the North Carolina business community decided that “it can’t wait.” Firms have taken the bull by the horns, reaching out directly to local K-12 schools and community colleges to improve relationships and demand better alignment. The University of North Carolina system is starting to shift as well, becoming more demand-driven and adding online offerings.

A major North Carolina Chamber response to workforce challenges is the new **Institute for Workforce Competitiveness** (IWC), created within the NC Chamber Foundation early in 2022. IWC’s initial task is to

inventory workforce successes from businesses around the state and broadcast local models that can be replicated. Subsequent actions will be to convene and connect leaders around workforce alignment, and promote data-driven policies. Another successful solution is the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Academy of NC. The NC Chamber started working with the U.S. Chamber Foundation on TPM in 2019. The current goal is to get 25 individuals around the state trained in TPM. The chamber plans to award scholarships for participants, particularly from rural areas. It is also exploring small Kickstarter grants for each program graduate.

The 2022 legislative agenda for the NC Chamber prioritizes education and workforce issues such as 1) third grade reading proficiency; 2) adult worker reskilling; 3) support for community colleges, especially for competitive instructor pay; and 4) addressing age and liability hurdles to facilitate student work-based learning. Gary Salamido notes that his members support both short-term (reskilling) and long-term (third grade reading) workforce pipeline efforts.

At the federal level, the chamber suggests revisiting OSHA regulations (dealing with age limits and workplace safety) to make

sure they align with the modern workplace. Also, federal programs for apprenticeships and other work-based learning should be made more nimble and innovative by partnering with groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers.

The NC Chamber Foundation was established in 2013 to boost state competitiveness in the three pillars of Education & Talent, Business Climate, and Infrastructure. It provides private sector research, analysis and dashboards to measure and raise the state’s competitiveness. The foundation president is currently dedicated to building the Institute for Workforce Competitiveness. The chamber also has one government affairs staffer dedicated to education policy. Advocacy work is funded through member dues, while the foundation is entirely supported by separate private sector fundraising. Two campaigns to obtain three-to-five year commitments have each been multi-million dollar successes.

The NC Chamber points to its fight to keep high statewide learning standards in K-12 reading and math as a great success story. It also hopes that with the Institute for Workforce Competitiveness, the best is yet to come.

North Dakota



Workforce Development is one of the three components of the Greater North Dakota Chamber of Commerce's advocacy agenda (the other two are Business Climate and Infrastructure). Greater North Dakota Chamber policy objectives in workforce development and education include:

- A. Strengthening collaboration between businesses and educational institutions to create an education system that is more responsive to employer needs.
- B. Emphasizing career awareness, worked-based learning, and upskilling opportunities in education and training offerings.
- C. Reforming the professional licensing process to better serve industry and hiring needs.

In the 2021 legislative session, the chamber's workforce advocacy efforts resulted in the continuation of the **ND Career Builders** workforce development initiative. This effort is designed to promote, attract, or retain in-demand occupations for North Dakota's workforce. Career Builders provides scholarships or loan repayment for students in certificate and degree programs at a North Dakota college or university. The program of study must be for a high-need or emerging occupation in one of 11 industry sectors. State funds match contributions from a business, dollar for dollar.

In the upcoming session, the Chamber's workforce advocacy efforts will emphasize two key areas designed to increase opportunities for additional talent to enter the labor force. These are:

- Creating flexibility within occupational licensing requirements, and
- Supporting innovative childcare solutions.

The Greater North Dakota Chamber also operates the North Dakota Manufacturing Council, and members of the Manufacturing Council enjoy membership in both organizations. Career awareness initiatives of the ND Manufacturing Council include participation in the nationwide **Dream It. Do It.** program and coordinating Manufacturing Day events in the state.

The chamber does not currently operate a foundation or have dedicated workforce development staff.





Ohio

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce does not manage workforce programs, but acts as a facilitator to connect member businesses with numerous programs offered by the state, non-profits, local governments, and higher learning. The state's key budget priorities for 2022-23 include:

- Higher education support such as Second Chance Grants to incentivize Ohioans to return to school and complete degrees;
- Financial aid for short-term workforce training leading to a credential or certificate;
- Commercial truck driver training grants and loans;
- Expansion of nursing bachelor's degree programs;
- Funding to expand aerospace education links between Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and higher education institutions;
- Job creation and training efforts for military families in Ohio.

The Ohio Chamber oversees 10 policy committees driven by the knowledge and expertise of its members—including an Education & Workforce Development Committee.

This committee work guides the chamber's policy priorities and engagement on legislative issues. The Government Affairs team has a designated lobbyist on-staff who oversees the Education & Workforce Development Committee and monitors and engages on all related state activity.

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce Research Foundation is working with Accenture to craft *Ohio BOLD: A Blueprint for Accelerating the Innovation Economy*. Developing, retaining, and attracting talent that Ohio's industry demands is one of three strategic priorities of the plan. The Research Foundation is examining issues affecting the workforce (education and training, childcare, housing) as well as quality of life. The final report is scheduled to be released by fall 2022. The chamber will advocate for legislative action to implement the blueprint.

The chamber's 2021-2022 policy agenda includes several workforce and education topics:

- Strengthening school district Business Advisory Councils to build stronger relationships with local employers;

- Ensuring the continuation of the TechCred program (which has grown from \$1 million in funding to \$58 million) —TechCred provides employer grants to increase employee skills and credentials;
- Continued efforts to alleviate "benefit cliffs;"
- Advocacy for the proposed Graduate and Retain Ohio's Workforce (GROW) Act. GROW seeks to attract and keep students and workers in Ohio using state income tax credits, targeted scholarships and expanded student aid;
- Senate Bill 166 (signed into law December 2021) creates the Student Pathways to Career Success Grant Program. This creates financial incentives for businesses to provide work-based learning opportunities for students enrolled in technical programs;
- Enhanced funding for all post-secondary job training and credentialing options.

Oklahoma



The State Chamber in Oklahoma recently completed a study to develop a state workforce development plan. The study examined issues with the Oklahoma labor market and built a plan to address those issues. The study resulted in a set of 36 initiatives for Oklahoma to pursue. Solutions are clustered around:

- Talent attraction
- Education
- Skills development, and
- Increasing productivity with more efficiency and automation.

The largest initiative will be better alignment of workforce development programs in state government to eliminate duplication. The study also recommends performance metrics for progress. The study will be released in the summer of 2022. The State Chamber expects some initiatives to be implemented this year with support of the governor's office, while others will take legislative action next year.

The State Chamber has supported workforce development efforts in the past. Their 2030 plan has education policy initiatives such as advocating

for school choice. The chamber's 2022 legislative agenda also urges realignment of the higher education system's administration, and retooling unemployment benefits to incentivize work.

The State Chamber does not have staff or funding dedicated to workforce development. However, momentum created by the state workforce study could result in the chamber increasing its involvement in workforce development.

The largest initiative will be better alignment of workforce development programs in state government to eliminate duplication.





Oregon

The recently passed **Future Ready Oregon** is a comprehensive \$200 million investment package that supports education and training for family-wage careers, prioritizing underserved communities. Approximately half of this funding will go to community organizations and workforce boards to retrain and grow the workforce. Oregon Business and Industry (OBI), the state's chamber organization, supported the bill but is carefully watching its implementation. OBI's proposal to have chambers of commerce included as community organizations eligible to receive grants was rejected in the legislative process.

OBI's workforce development focus is public policy advocacy. Whereas in the past, most of OBI's advocacy was centered around education more broadly, there has been a shift in

the last year to a focus on workforce development in particular. The priorities of Oregon Business and Industry include:

- A.** Removing barriers to training and certification;
- B.** Access and affordability for all forms of secondary education;
- C.** Bridging the digital divide; and
- D.** Growing and retraining the workforce.

OBI's Research and Education Foundation supports workforce development through research.

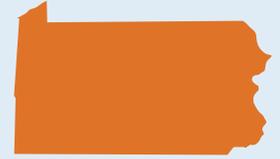
OBI supports local chambers of commerce, amplifying their education and workforce initiatives. It also works with trade association partners, such as home builders, to tackle issues impacting workforce development like housing. State tax issues that impact workforce recruitment, including a reliance on personal income tax, are also part of OBI's policy agenda.

Oregon Business and Industry dedicates one-third to one-half of a staff position to workforce development. The budget for workforce development is negligible since there is no program funding.

Future Ready Oregon is a comprehensive \$200 million investment package that supports education and training for family-wage careers, prioritizing underserved communities.



Pennsylvania



The Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry and its foundation, the Pennsylvania Chamber Foundation, are rethinking the workforce development strategy. Since 2019, the chamber has been involved in raising career awareness; promoting skilled trades; talent attraction and retention; workforce training; and promoting work experiences. Recently, they hit the pause button to rethink how best the chamber can support education and workforce development. It may be in the area of policy and advocacy rather than programming.

Prior to 2019, the chamber was involved in workforce development, but a program of work was formalized in the 2019 Strategic Plan. The foundation hired a full-time staff position to focus on workforce development. Most of the chamber's work in the last few years has focused on getting information out to parents, teachers, and counselors about skilled trades and overall career awareness. One example

is a career calculator that showed how much a degree cost compared with average earnings in relevant occupations.

Currently, the PA Chamber is focused on encouraging the state to hire an independent third party to investigate how well local, regional, and state workforce programs align. The chamber believes there may be misalignment and inefficiencies that such a study could uncover. The chamber's legislative agenda focuses on education policies such as school choice, education improvement tax credit, outcomes, and quality of teachers.

The 2019 Strategic Plan period is coming to a close at the end of 2022. The new strategic planning process will expand the chamber's support of workforce development, likely with a different approach. For example, the chamber may focus on advocating for policies that ensure a talent pipeline rather than investing in specific programs.

A subjective achievement resulting from the previous work plan has been changing perceptions about working in the trades. Going forward, the greatest achievement of the PA Chamber's workforce development program will be if they can convince the state to acknowledge the need for a comprehensive, independent study of how well or poorly workforce development is done in Pennsylvania.

The workforce development program is supported by two full-time positions. One is housed in the foundation. This position was laid off until the chamber reassesses the program's direction. The second position is a lobbyist and is employed in the chamber. Events and programming are housed in the foundation, while advocacy is under government affairs in the chamber. The related annual budget is approximately \$150,000. It is expected that funding for workforce development will increase to implement the new strategic plan.



Rhode Island

This small state enjoys some big advantages when it comes to workforce talent. The city of Providence is within a one-hour commute of 4.7 million workers. Also within one hour of Providence, 100,000 college students graduate each year and enter the workforce.

To build on these strengths, Rhode Island has developed several initiatives to improve the workforce pipeline. Among them:

- **Real Jobs RI** is an employer-driven effort, creating a network with training providers and community organizations to train individuals to be placed immediately in a job, or to upskill existing workers. In a recent three-year period, Real Jobs RI trained nearly 3,000 people who were placed in a new job, and upskilled 3,760 incumbent workers. Industry sectors taking advantage of Real Jobs RI include manufacturing, financial, life sciences and healthcare.
- The **Prepare RI** career readiness initiative has created a dramatic increase in CTE programming since 2015 and offers paid summer internships to high school juniors across the state. All Rhode Island high school students now have access to CTE programs in high-demand sectors.

- Started in 2016, **CS4RI** now offers computer science curriculum in all Rhode Island school districts. An Advanced Placement (AP) course in computer science is available in 78 percent of state high schools, the highest percentage in the nation.
- The state's **Wavemaker Fellowship** program provides tax credits for recent college graduates working in a STEM or design field. The tax credits can cover student loan repayments up to \$6,000 per year for four years. About 900 people have obtained Wavemaker Fellowships so far. Fellows also can access networking events and education in areas like homebuying, personal finance and regional volunteer opportunities.

In 2022, state leaders allocated \$12 million in federal recovery funds to create the **Site Acquisition Program** to develop affordable and supportive housing. The funds can be accessed (up to \$1 million per project) by non-profit, for-profit, or local government entities to secure land for new housing. Applicants must demonstrate that "they are ready to commence redevelopment of properties." Properties will carry a deed restriction for at least 30 years enforcing affordability and income requirements.

For fiscal year 2023, the state budget places a great deal of emphasis on childcare availability and affordability.

The Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce serves the entire state. One of the chamber's five key elements for success is access to talent. In its 2022 legislative principles, the Greater Providence Chamber emphasizes its vision to establish Rhode Island as a "national leader for private sector job growth." The chamber advocates for 1) higher education investments to drive statewide education attainment, and 2) K-12 and childcare reforms and investments, stressing equitable access to high-quality education including work-based learning to develop "21st century skills."

South Carolina



A major early effort in education and workforce for the South Carolina Chamber came in 1999 when it received a federal **GEAR UP** grant, focused on improving high school graduation rates and career readiness. At the time, the chamber had an education department with a staff of six. A big part of the GEAR UP work was improved K-12 and business partnerships. At one point, more than 200 businesses partnered with schools. In 2007, the initiative shifted to more of a cohort model, following groups of students starting in the seventh grade, providing them with coaching, and emphasizing the development of “college-going culture” in schools.

For the chamber’s business members, workforce is by far the number one issue. Unemployment in South Carolina was 3.3 percent as of May 2022. The chamber is active in attraction and retention, and recruitment of a more diverse workforce. The **Be Pro Be Proud** career awareness initiative for the skilled trades is a success—South Carolina was the second state in America to implement this program. Other current programming:

A. HBCU STEM—started four years ago by Boeing, involving seven four-year HBCUs across the state. Twenty-eight students were in the initial cohort. It is focused on STEM experiences as well as career preparation: interview skills, resumes, attire.

B. Business Week—more than 37 years old, a week for high school students to learn about entrepreneurship, networking, and the business world in South Carolina.

C. Annual Workforce Symposium—now a one-day event.

In recent years, the SC Chamber has emphasized advocacy for K-12 schools: teacher pay and developing well-rounded students. When COVID closures hit, broadband access (especially in rural areas) came to the forefront as an education issue. A main policy advocacy goal now is passage of a bill to allocate \$124 million over two years in workforce scholarships, providing free training for in-demand careers at technical colleges across South Carolina. The chamber is urging other measures to address labor force participation, and also supports a hate crimes bill.

The chamber sees the greatest federal-level advocacy need in immigration reform. Members tell them that E-Verify has been a disaster, although they are hesitant to discuss this publicly.

Cynthia Bennett is the only chamber employee dedicated to education and workforce. There is an Education & Workforce Development Foundation (501c3), with no staff. The SC Chamber has received grants through it in the past, and is ramping up efforts to win more grants now. The chamber gets some workforce-related contributions from corporate foundations and private philanthropy. Allocation of the SC Chamber’s staff time and resources:

- 65 percent of efforts are on advocacy (and 20-25 percent of that is on workforce and education);
- 35 percent of efforts are on programming (and 25 percent of that is in workforce and education).

The SC Chamber considers its biggest related successes to be 1) the GEAR UP initiative which impacted K-12 schools for 16 years; 2) the HBCU STEM program; and 3) increasing the apprenticeship pipeline in South Carolina.



South Dakota

South Dakota enjoys some significant labor force advantages. Education attainment of the adult population is high—the percentage of adults with an associate degree is third-highest in the country, while the share with a high school diploma or greater ranks 13th nationally. The labor force participation rate is much higher than the U.S. average. Also, South Dakota has experienced net in-migration in recent years.

However, the state is not immune to workforce challenges. Labor force participation, while high, has dropped steadily. The unemployment rate is very low, recently at 2.3 percent. In a 2021 survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, South Dakota companies said that their biggest challenge to capacity and productivity was, by a wide margin, “labor availability for open positions.”

The South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry supports and tracks many legislative proposals related to workforce development. One important success in 2022 was the passing and signing of a \$200

million workforce housing bill. This act provides \$100 million in revolving loan funds and \$100 million in grants to be used for infrastructure projects (water, sewer, roads, right-of-way purchases, traffic signals, etc.) that support housing development. Grants may cover up to one-third of a project’s total cost.

Additional positive measures from this year’s legislative session included a \$90 million expansion of Dakota State University’s cyber security program, and a \$15 million allocation for the University of South Dakota’s Discovery District biomedical innovation facility in Sioux Falls. The mission of the USD Discovery District is to “help grow companies in South Dakota and connect universities with innovation-driven businesses.”

Other state-level education and workforce initiatives in South Dakota:

- **Build Dakota Scholarships.** Started in 2015 with \$50 million in gifts from a South Dakota philanthropist and the South Dakota Future Fund, the Build Dakota Scholarships use “technical

education to address South Dakota’s workforce shortage.” Both in-state and out-of-state students can graduate debt-free when they enroll in a full-time industry program at one of the state’s technical colleges, and also work in that field for three years in South Dakota after graduation. In 2020, another \$20 million was invested to fund the program for five more years.

- **Dakota Seeds.** To spur the creation of more work internships, the Dakota Seeds fund will pay one-half of an intern’s wages, up to \$2,000. Positions must be related to STEM fields, manufacturing or accounting, and must pay at least \$12.00 per hour.
- **Giant Vision Competition.** The governor’s Giant Vision program establishes competitions for students to explore entrepreneurial opportunities, and for adults to develop a new business idea. Students can win up to \$5,000 and adults up to \$20,000 for their innovative ideas.

Tennessee



The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry advocates for a wide range of education and workforce development policies. Tennessee Works includes advocating for expanding dual enrollment; increasing post-secondary enrollment; career awareness; childcare; soft skill development; incentivizing work-based learning/ apprenticeships; computer science classes; CDL expansion; funding industry credentials; and uniform workforce certifications. There are several education and workforce development programs that the chamber supports such as Tennessee LEAP, Tennessee Reconnect (Drive to 55), MakerMinded, Tennessee Promise, YouScience, and others.

Four signature programs are funded through the chamber's foundation:

- The **Career Awareness Preparatory Systems** (CAPS) program connects local businesses with local schools by providing teachers with classroom-ready resources that improve career awareness. CAPS is funded through a \$500,000 state grant.
- The **Work Ethic Distinction** program is a workforce readiness credential that can be earned by high school seniors. Employers guarantee an interview to students who complete the program. This effort is supported in-kind with Tennessee Chamber staff.
- The chamber is bringing the **Be Pro Be Proud** program to Tennessee this year through a state grant and fundraising. It is a mobile workforce unit with simulators that travels to high schools. Students explore skilled trade careers through virtual simulators (for welding, diesel repair, CDL, CNC, heavy equipment operation, etc.).
- The **Smart Factory Institute** provides manufacturers with connections, collaborative relationships, and certifications for improving manufacturing processes. Through a \$400,000 state grant, the chamber helped establish the SFI in Chattanooga. It informs businesses about the role of automation and Industry 4.0 and allows them to see technology in action and conduct workforce training.

All of the workforce development initiatives are supported by chamber staff and contractors, such as with the CAPS program. The Tennessee Chamber plans to add a full-time position to support the workforce development programs of its foundation. The \$2.4 million annual foundation budget for workforce development is a combination of state grants (the majority of funds) and private donations. In addition to the foundation, the chamber spends approximately \$250,000-\$350,000 a year including the new position being added.

On the horizon is a larger education policy initiative of the chamber: to encourage K-12 schools to meet a certain percentage of graduates enrolled in college or a technical school. This aligns with the state's Tennessee Connect (Drive to 55) goal that by the year 2025, 55 percent of Tennessee adults will have a degree, certificate, or credential. Another goal is to develop something similar to the U.S. Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management program in Tennessee.



Texas

The Texas Association of Business (TAB) sees workforce as the number one issue all across the state and among small, medium and large employers. Businesses need more workers and those with the right “skills, skills, skills.” The importance and intensity of this issue has grown every year since the Great Recession. Companies in Texas are strong supporters of CTE in K-12 schools and skills-based post-secondary training at community colleges. As noted in many states, TAB sees the need for a “cultural shift” where a good, skills-based career path is viewed as being as valuable as a four-year college degree.

Texas state government operates on a biennial budget. Among TAB’s current leading priorities for the legislature are:

- Dual enrollment programs, where young people can earn college credit and/or certificates coming out of high school;
- Second chance hiring—initiatives including interviewing skills and resume preparation for inmates, and assistance with needed

documents (social security card, driver license) upon release;

- Early childhood development—Texas might be ahead of the curve in providing free pre-K programs, but needs to maintain an emphasis on this important need;
- Immigration;
- Integration of military veterans and their spouses, with licensing reform needed to smooth employment paths for spouses.

At the federal level, the Texas Association of Business is very active to promote increased immigration at all skill levels. This includes expansion of H-1B visas, NAFTA professional TN visas, green cards for STEM PhDs, and DACA paths to citizenship.

Glenn Hamer believes that workforce development assets that work well in Texas include 1) a visible and active Texas Workforce Commission whose members have strong relationships with the business community, and 2) Texas State Technical College (started in Waco in 1965) as an outstanding model of

performance-based education in which the college’s funding is based on the employment success of their students.

TAB’s staff includes one person dedicated to education issues. Staff positions are funded by member dues. TAB also has a foundation that raises funds from private sector members and philanthropy. The foundation not been particularly active in workforce and education, but the organization is looking to ramp up activity in that arena. One initiative is to develop a program for local chambers across Texas to assist second-chance hires.

Notable legislative successes for TAB in recent years include the \$11.6 billion HB 3 school finance measure; partnering with other groups to support CTE program funding; and promoting accountability in post-secondary education and training programs.

Texas State Technical College (started in Waco in 1965)... an outstanding model of performance-based education in which the college’s funding is based on the employment success of their students.

Utah



The Salt Lake Chamber (SLC) serves as the lead policy advocate for the association of chamber organizations throughout Utah. The Salt Lake Chamber's 2022 legislative priorities include an emphasis on workforce, immigration and education. Its policy positions include:

- A. Workforce**—advocating for a) training and job placement for displaced workers; b) technical and vocational training with more employer-led earn and learn opportunities such as apprenticeships; c) competency-based education emphasizing credential attainment; and d) the Return Utah initiative to help adults return to the workforce after a long absence, with short-term training, mentoring and job placement.
- B. Immigration**—support for the Utah Compact (created in 2010 and reaffirmed in 2019) that advocates for “policies that increase racial equity” and opportunities for all residents to succeed. SLC notes that Utah has a 17 percent immigrant population and emphasizes the entrepreneurial contribution of immigrants—with

12 percent of self-employed business owners being immigrants who generate \$453 million in revenues annually.

- C. Education**—advocating for a) access to full-day kindergarten for every child in the state; and b) higher teacher pay. SLC notes that Utah ranked in the bottom 10 for change in teacher pay compared with all occupational earnings in 2021.

In the 2022 legislative session, a bill in the House would have allocated \$48 million for expand all-day kindergarten, enough money to provide statewide access for all families. According to one article, Utah public schools provide this access to 30 percent of students, compared with 80 percent nationwide. In the final bill this funding was reduced to \$12 million, which along with other changes will “make it much harder to implement, particularly for rural and geographically spread out districts.”

The Salt Lake Chamber operates a number of other initiatives impacting workforce and education. Among these:

- Utah Community Builders, a 501c3 social impact foundation affiliated with SLC. Programs of the Community Builders include the Opportunity Coalition to connect businesses with disengaged adults looking for work, and Workforce Resilience through Mental Fitness;
- A best practices guide for closing the Gender Wage Gap;
- A Rural Workforce Network, striving to identify more remote work opportunities for rural residents;
- The Housing Gap Coalition, addressing the 54,000 unit gap between housing supply and demand in the state, affecting availability and affordability. Utah’s population doubled in the past 30 years.

At the state level, the Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity offers long-running workforce training programs like Custom Fit, which has a “30-year proven track record.” Custom Fit provides up to half of the cost of customized training for employees of Utah firms, in partnership with the state system of technical colleges. In a recent year, Custom Fit delivered 316,850 instructional hours serving over 19,000 trainees.



Vermont

As heard in other states, Vermont Chamber members say that workforce is their number one issue. The lack of workers is impeding their firms' progress. The small staff of the Vermont Chamber focuses on legislative advocacy. Successes in 2021 and 2022 include:

- A.** A workforce package centered around training and upskilling of adult workers. It also addressed the nursing shortage.
- B.** A third consecutive year of funding for **remote worker and worker relocation incentive** programs. These successful programs lack marketing dollars, however.
- C.** Substantial funding for new housing development.
- D.** A bill to increase access to childcare (though probably not adequately funded.)

Betsy Bishop notes that the training and upskilling efforts are valuable, but don't address the state's major demographic issues of a declining population and aging workforce (Vermont has the nation's second-oldest median age.) Growing the population is a critical challenge. The chamber feels it is important to let people from other states (especially

in nearby metro areas) know that Vermont wants them. One strategy is to convert those owning second homes in Vermont into permanent residents.

Other legislative priorities in 2022:

- Career & Technical Education (CTE) which needs a "major overhaul" in terms of creating a cultural shift in the state—where good jobs not requiring a four-year degree are valued;
- Funding for refugee resettlement;
- Second-chance hiring programs;
- Removing the tax on military retirement pay.

The **Vermont Futures Project** is the chamber's foundation. It started a focus on workforce and talent six years ago, providing an important data piece that Vermont needs about 10,000 more workers per year. The Futures Project has also helped with myth-busting, such as the idea that retaining college graduates in Vermont will solve the workforce shortage. It won't.

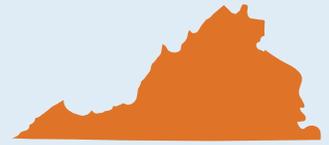
Priority issues that the Vermont Chamber would like to see addressed at the federal level are immigration policy and refugee resettlement policy and funding.

The chamber does limited workforce programming itself, mostly striving to understand existing programs and connect business members to those resources. One annual event that it hosts is a Manufacturing Summit—a "virtual supply chain event" with a Find Your Workforce feature. The event provides employers with access to National Guard members and students from UVM's College of Engineering & Mathematical Sciences and Vermont Technical College.

The Vermont Business Roundtable hosts the U.S. Chamber Talent Pipeline project, with which the chamber would like to collaborate more closely. The chamber is also considering doing DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) programming for the many small businesses in the state.

The Vermont Chamber and Vermont Futures Project foundation (501c3) have no staffers dedicated to workforce. Funding for their efforts mainly comes from member dues and event sponsorships, with the foundation also doing separate private sector fundraising. The chamber is most proud of the state's relocation incentive programs, in which it is a national leader.

Virginia



A recent survey of 7,000 members made it clear that work readiness is the number one priority of the Virginia business community. The Virginia Chamber's *Blueprint Virginia:2030* business plan for the Commonwealth (released in 2021) covers 11 focus areas—from healthcare to energy to housing—and virtually all of them touch on workforce in a significant way. *Blueprint Virginia's* workforce and education section provides recommendations in areas including:

1. Early learning and childcare support
2. K-12 education system investments, emphasizing talent pathways and work-based learning
3. Post-secondary education including early college, dual enrollment and work-based learning
4. Equity—addressing learning readiness gaps and the digital divide
5. Post-secondary attainment, supporting New Economy Workforce Credential Grants
6. Talent attraction.

A common theme in these recommendations is “connecting learning to earning.” The Virginia Chamber Foundation operates

several programs to promote these connections. One is VTOP, the **Virginia Talent & Opportunity Partnership**. VTOP aims to improve pathways for in-demand careers in each region of Virginia. The chamber provides support to match college students with work-based learning in their region, ensuring that students, universities, and businesses are all “intern-ready.” VTOP recently received a significant grant from the Virginia General Assembly to build and operate this program.

Another leading foundation effort is **Hire Vets Now**, to retain the 20,000 personnel who retire from active duty in Virginia each year. This program started in early 2018, and Virginia is now retaining about 10,000 separating military annually with a goal of retaining 15,000. The Hire Vets Now initiative includes a Memorandum of Understanding with the state's Department of Veteran Services, and has 22 on-base events scheduled this year. Hire Vets Now attracted \$200,000 in funding to connect vets with leading in-state career opportunities like cybersecurity.

The Virginia Chamber's 2022 legislative priorities in education and workforce include support for VTOP, early learning and childcare, and two other state-level initiatives:

- HBCU Funding—in which Virginia's four HBCUs can obtain grants from businesses to develop in-demand skills and get college graduates hired by Virginia firms;
- Growth4VA—a campaign to reward Virginia four-year institutions for producing graduates with in-demand degrees. Universities receive financial rewards and greater autonomy.

At the national level, the Virginia Chamber suggests a national campaign to highlight the attractiveness of technical careers requiring a certificate or short-term degree. Of the chamber and foundation's 20 employees, five are dedicated to workforce and education efforts. The total budget is approximately \$5 million with \$1.5 million focused on workforce programs, training, conferences and events. The foundation attracts about \$1 million a year, 90 percent from the private sector. Member firms also sponsor an annual workforce conference.

Barry DuVal and the Virginia Chamber regard Hire Vets Now as one of their most successful efforts, noting that it has taken four years to develop and expand into the model program that it is now.



Washington

The Association of Washington Businesses (AWB) leads advocacy for education and workforce development. AWB's Institute, a 501c3 nonprofit, takes the lead on creating a vision, generating data and research, and implementing programs for workforce development.

The AWB Institute, in partnership with Washington State University Extension, is launching **Remote Work Certification**. The program prepares residents to take advantage of remote work opportunities. It is funded by grants, including one from the state Department of Commerce. The program started in Utah and was recognized as a best practice by the Western Governors Association. The Remote Work Certification program is under The Rural Initiative, an umbrella of institute programs that address economic prosperity in the remote regions of Washington.

The institute is in the process of establishing a workforce development task force in response to employers saying this is their top issue. This task force will host a series of meetings in summer 2022 to establish a vision and strategy. The report will be released this fall. A statewide workforce portal is under

development. It is being modeled after the Work for Indiana portal. It is initially funded by AWB with some funding from the community college system.

In June 2022, the AWB Institute will host a workforce summit. The goal is to bring together employers for meaningful conversation on workforce needs and struggles, to share survey results, and for match-making between business and education partners. The results of three manufacturing studies last year will be presented and discussed. Part of the conversation will be how to meet the state's goal of doubling manufacturing jobs in the next 10 years.

AWB sponsors an annual **Manufacturing Week bus tour** that visits manufacturers and educational programs and engages teachers, students, and companies. The tour is funded through sponsorships. A regular quarterly survey informs the AWB workforce development agenda and institute programs. In the spring 2022 member survey, respondents listed "lack of qualified workers" as their number two concern, behind only inflation. Sixty-two percent said that the workforce issue was an important challenge.

On the policy side, AWB has an education and workforce development committee, employment law committee, and is involved with the state workforce development board. The education and workforce development legislative objectives include issues such as a) early learning so that all kids enter school "ready to learn;" b) career & technical education (CTE) curricula; c) reforms that reduce opportunity gaps and eliminate systemic barriers; d) expanded online learning and dual credit for CTE offerings; and e) a comprehensive, career-connected workforce training system. The policy team is oriented toward the state legislature. The institute also understands that employers' needs are local, and it interacts with local and regional chambers to find solutions to workforce needs.

Workforce development is supported by one full-time staff and one contractor (Senior Advisor and Program Manager) at the AWB Institute, and part of three full-time staff positions at AWB. The institute spends approximately \$350,000 a year on workforce development, and AWB spends an estimated \$500,000-\$750,000 annually.

West Virginia



“We believe the challenge of finding the next generation of workers is the most comprehensive challenge facing employers in West Virginia,” says West Virginia Chamber President Steve Roberts.

The West Virginia Chamber and its foundation directly support workforce development programs and advocate for education and workforce development policies. In 2018, the chamber published *Public Education in West Virginia: An Overview of Teacher Pay and Benefits, and Student Achievement* to help explain school financing in West Virginia. The chamber’s position paper on education policy stresses accountability, transparency, qualified principals and teachers, innovation, local control, expanded pre-K, partnerships, and meeting students’ emotional needs.

The West Virginia Chamber combatted workforce issues head-on at the state legislature this year and celebrated the passage of a major workforce and jobs chamber-backed bill, designed to incentivize employers to create childcare facilities on their premises. The

transformative childcare legislation, SB 656, addressed a critical workforce issue within the state. Some major employers have shared they now plan to open childcare facilities because of the new law.

The Chamber Foundation manages **Jobs for West Virginia’s Graduates**. The program was started as a state-funded and managed program in 1997 under Governor Underwood. Due to decreasing funding and attention, the Chamber Foundation took over the program, funding it with private donations. Jobs for West Virginia’s Graduates provides mentoring for at-risk high school students to prepare them for their next step beyond high school, whether that is a four-year college, community college, military, or the workforce. The program funds Job Specialists (public school teachers) to teach a curriculum of elective courses that help students prepare for life after high school. The program boasts a 96 percent graduation rate.

The chamber is expanding its workforce development support. It is developing interactive features on its website for career fairs and job

postings. In addition to revamping of job and career fair opportunities on the website, it now shares weekly job and job-event updates with its members. A goal is to hire a full-time staff person, housed in the Chamber Foundation, who would create linkages and improve communication between public schools, higher education, and employers. Another goal is to improve the state’s workforce development programs, of which the chamber is critical. The West Virginia Chamber will seek legislation to better align, make transparent, and refocus the state’s programs in workforce development.

The chamber’s workforce development programs are supported by all staff members to varying degrees. The goal is to create a full-time position in the Chamber Foundation devoted to workforce development. The foundation, funded through grants and annually renewing contributions, spends approximately \$325,000 a year on workforce development.



Wisconsin

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) includes under its umbrella the WMC Foundation. Education and workforce development advocacy is done by WMC, and workforce programming by the foundation. The chamber's legislative agenda is the approved workforce development platform. The WMC Foundation's *Wisconsin 2035* vision includes a wider range of workforce development goals. The chamber has been involved in workforce development for many years but there has been a significant increase in advocacy and programming over the last 10 years.

The chamber's workforce-related legislative agenda centers on talent attraction and retention. Marketing career opportunities to attract workers to the state; increasing STEM opportunities for students; expanding technical education programming in high school; upskilling the workforce; and expanding apprenticeship programs are key points of the agenda. In addition to talent attraction and retention, the foundation's *Wisconsin 2035* plan calls for talent expansion (increased labor force participation) and highlights barriers to entry, non-traditional talent, and links to childcare accessibility.

Operated out of the foundation, **Wisconsin Business World** inspires and engages students to learn about business, entrepreneurship, and the free market. Another key aspect of the program is providing career awareness to students throughout Wisconsin. The program has three versions: a one-day Mini Business World, a summer camp, and Business World in the classroom. In the summer camp program, students build a company and create a product, marketing plan, and financial plan. Business World has educated more than 30,000 students using videos, guest speakers, and camps. Getting teachers to buy into the Business World program has been critical to the effort to reach more students. In addition to Business World, a two-day teacher academy exposes teachers to C-suite level business leaders.

WMC recently started a new workforce program, Wisconsin Leads. It is for emerging leaders in business, training people to enter the C-suite. This year is the first cohort of 27 people. Participants meet three times a year for two days each.

The chamber views education as a part of its workforce initiative. They push for career readiness, increased proficiency rates in math and language arts, supporting career counselors in schools, and expansion of youth apprenticeships. Several chamber staff serve on workforce development agency boards.

Some portion of seven staff positions (three from the WMC Foundation and four from the chamber) support workforce development advocacy and programming. Funding comes from WMC dues (for lobbying/advocacy) and donations to the foundation (for programming). In total, the chamber and foundation allocate approximately \$650,000 a year to workforce development. WMC tracks how many people participate in its programs and partner involvement.

Wyoming



As the smallest U.S. state in population—and with the second-lowest population density (after Alaska)—Wyoming acutely feels the challenges of meeting the business community’s need for a pipeline of qualified workers. Priority industry sectors include manufacturing, healthcare, energy and natural resources, and agriculture.

One of the newest, major statewide efforts to help Wyoming “develop a resilient workforce and economy” is the **Wyoming Innovation Partnership**, or WIP. WIP is an initiative of the governor’s office started in 2021 and involving the University of Wyoming, the state’s community colleges, state business council and the workforce services agency. A primary goal of the Wyoming Innovation Partnership is to provide opportunities for young residents and college graduates to stay in or return to Wyoming through “a developed ecosystem that drives innovation, skills development, and introductions to new jobs....” Five key objectives are:

1. Developing academic and skill development pathways;
2. Supporting and training entrepreneurs, facilitating new business starts;

3. Attracting private funding and developing business partnerships (for research, internships, apprenticeships, etc.);
4. Recruiting, expanding, and relocating businesses in Wyoming;
5. Providing the infrastructure to develop Wyoming-based commodities.

Metrics of success for WIP will include 1) increased post-secondary enrollment and graduate retention; and 2) increased average wages.

Wyoming Grown is a state-level talent attraction program to lure former residents back to the state. It promotes available jobs in technology, education, and healthcare while touting quality higher education at a low cost, and a high quality of life. Other state workforce and education programs include:

- Wyoming Works—grants to train adult workers for in-demand occupations based on the needs of leading sectors in each community college’s service area. The \$5 million allocated by the legislature in 2019 can be used for non-credit or for-credit training, everything from a two-week certificate to a two-year degree.

- Complete College Wyoming—a community college program started in 2012 for returning adults to complete a certificate or degree program. Complete College Wyoming is a strategy for the state to meet its post-secondary education attainment goals, seen as “essential for economic diversification and social mobility.”
- The state’s Workforce Development Training Fund—providing grants for businesses to help with the cost of training new hires, upskilling or reskilling existing workers, operating internship and apprenticeship programs.

In 2022, the state legislature allocated \$10 million for Wyoming’s Tomorrow Scholarship program. Tomorrow Scholarships are designed for non-traditional students ages 25 and older to receive up to \$7,200 to attend a public college in the state. The program is aimed at the estimated 212,000 Wyoming adults without any post-high school degree or credential.

Strategies for Enhancing

YOUR WORKFORCE PROGRAM

No matter where a state organization currently resides on the scale of workforce advocacy and programming activities—from none to a full agenda in both areas—chambers can benefit from reviewing this menu of options. These vary in complexity, the amount of resources required, and the time needed to ramp up new efforts related to training and education.

**1-2
YEARS**

Start-Up and Short Term

Take advantage of existing, proven resources.

Chamber organizations don't have to reinvent the wheel. They can borrow from proven tools and programs such as the U.S. Chamber Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management initiative. The U.S. Chamber also operates the America Works Initiative, with research, data and strategies covering topics from women's labor force participation and childcare to second-chance hiring and immigration. Other well-established program successes include the National Association of Manufacturers' Dream It. Do It., the Be Pro Be Proud career awareness effort pioneered by Arkansas in 2016, and Jobs For America's Graduates, a 40-year old non-profit with affiliates in 39 states.

Partner with like-minded organizations.

Many chambers pool resources with other groups to increase their impact in workforce and education. Associated Industries of Massachusetts has long teamed with the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education to advocate for public school reforms and other policy changes. The Nebraska Manufacturing Alliance is comprised of five manufacturing groups in the state including the Nebraska Chamber. In Alaska, the state chamber refers businesses to successful training conducted by the Associated General Contractors of Alaska and the Alaska Works Partnership. Making Maine Work was established in 2009 by the Maine State Chamber and the Maine Development Foundation, and now includes Educate Maine.

Survey your membership.

One of the most important and effective ways to establish a foundation for workforce activities is to survey your membership about the workforce supply and quality issues of greatest importance to them. In Indiana, the state chamber recently conducted its 14th annual employer workforce survey. Other state organizations doing deep dives on labor pool availability and skill issues include those in Florida, Washington, and Montana.

Hire a Workforce Director to connect business members with existing resources, and coordinate future chamber strategy.

Even for those chambers that are not planning to conduct any workforce programming, having a point person to guide employers to regional and state resources can be a great member benefit. In virtually every state there is an array of training and education activities through a state workforce agency, colleges and universities, industry trade associations, non-profits and other providers. But employers are often mystified about what these programs offer and how to access them. A business-focused coordinator can make those connections that simplify the process for members.

3-4
YEARS

Over the Medium Term

Advocate for a third-party review of state workforce system alignment.

Common criticisms of state workforce development systems include a lack of communication with employers and understanding of workplace needs, state agencies that are siloed, and duplication of activities. The State Chamber in Oklahoma studied these issues and called for better alignment of education and training efforts as well as improved metrics for measuring state-level progress. Legislators in other states have introduced measures to fund an outside review of the workforce system.

Press for more funding for short-term credit or non-credit training, upskilling and reskilling.

The great upheaval in many occupations caused by the COVID-induced economic shutdown resulted in a sudden need for worker reskilling and upskilling. Many states responded quickly by deploying ARPA and other federal funds for use in flexible, short-term retraining programs. Converting this (usually temporary) funding model into a more permanent training structure will benefit many adult workers and employers, as the workplace is likely to demand continued reskilling and upskilling.

Existing, short-term upskilling and reskilling programs include a) Return Utah—aimed at re-establishing the skills of those with an extended absence from the workplace; b) Virginia’s New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program, in which the average student is 35 years old; and c) Michigan’s Going PRO Talent Fund.

Address childcare and housing.

It wasn’t that long ago when issues of housing (availability and affordability) and childcare (availability, quality, cost) were viewed as outside the purview of chambers of commerce. That has all changed! State organizations may be wary of jumping into areas where they might lack expertise, but the importance of these two topics for labor force participation, talent attraction and talent retention cannot be denied.

One good way to get involved is by building coalitions that include in-state subject experts. The Utah Housing Gap Coalition is one example. The Salt Lake Chamber teamed with the Kem Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah to study declining affordability and the reasons behind a 54,000 unit gap between housing supply and demand in Utah.

Study effective talent attraction and retention programs for fit with your state.

Talent attraction incentives are a hot trend in economic development, along with marketing campaigns for talent attraction and retention. For states and state chambers that haven’t jumped into the fray, there are notable programs to study and possibly emulate. Vermont has established worker relocation and remote worker incentive programs that have shown success even with few marketing dollars behind them. Similar efforts are underway in Maine and West Virginia. Wisconsin has put significant funds behind its Think • Make • Happen talent initiative. Wyoming Grown seeks to lure former residents back to the state. New efforts include the AWI Institute’s Remote Work Certification program in Washington.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING YOUR WORKFORCE PROGRAM CONT.

5+
YEARS

Over the Longer Term

Seek grants for major programming efforts.

It can be impossible to implement the most ambitious workforce initiatives without a major funding infusion. But grant-writing efforts can pay off in game-changing ways. The Missouri Chamber Foundation won a \$6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to develop apprenticeships at Missouri technology firms, an effort that has already attracted over 1,500 apprentices since 2020. In 2022, the Mississippi Economic Council's Public Education Forum won a four-year, \$1 million grant to raise education attainment in the state.

Lobby for a state workforce office aligned with the governor's office.

As opposed to the sprawling and entrenched bureaucracies of some state workforce agencies, a small, nimble workforce office that reports to the governor can more easily focus on demand-driven ways to spur better alignment of education and training programs. Recent examples of new state workforce offices that understand business needs include Accelerate Mississippi, the Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy, and the New York State Office of Strategic Workforce Development.

Develop a program for essential workforce readiness skills.

In the shorter term, chambers can support existing career or workplace readiness programs that may be available in schools or out-of-school programs. Long-term, chambers can work with the business community to customize a workforce skills effort that meets regional company expectations. The Work Ethic Distinction credential program started in northeastern Tennessee but is now available for any school in the state to adopt, and is supported by the Tennessee Chamber's foundation. Work Ethic Distinction covers standards in 13 categories. Students who earn a credential will be granted a job interview with participating firms.

Engage disconnected and under-represented groups.

Given the need to boost labor force participation everywhere, business and non-profit organizations are reaching out to engage any under-represented group—from ex-offenders to the disabled, from women who left the labor force to care for children or elderly parents, to separating military veterans. An example of a well-developed initiative is the Kentucky Transformational Employment Program (KTEP), a partnership of the Kentucky Chamber Foundation and statewide health organizations. KTEP is for those needing substance abuse treatment who also may have involvement with the criminal justice system. Companies that adopt KTEP guidelines will not be held liable for civil actions related to negligent hiring or negligent acts of their employees.

Advocate for performance-based education reform.

Great patience may be required by those pushing for higher education reforms that make funding more performance-based or outcome-based. However, there are successful models that can be replicated. Texas State Technical College was established in 1965 in Waco, and now has 10 campuses across the state. TSTC is the “only technical college in Texas whose funding depends on whether our graduates get jobs.” For the most in-demand degrees, it offers a money-back guarantee if graduates don’t get a job within six months. Under consideration now is Growth4VA, a campaign to make Virginia “the best at affordable talent pathways.” To spur innovation in higher education, Growth4VA calls for the development of “a new funding model for the Virginia higher education system in which innovation is incentivized, performance is measured and rewarded, and institutions are granted optimal managerial flexibility in exchange for greater outcomes-focused accountability.”

After reviewing their current scope of work, some chambers may decide to add activities while others will conclude that chamber programming would only duplicate existing state-level initiatives. In the case of the latter, chambers can serve the important role of raising members’ awareness of workforce resources and connecting them with providers. Regardless, there is no indication that issues of labor force availability and adequacy of skills will lessen in importance anytime soon. As always, state organizations will need to rise to the challenge of providing responsive, relevant services to help members solve their critical workforce needs.



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