

# Partnering Up

## How industry partnerships can bring work-based learning to scale

BY KATIE SPIKER

**W**ork-based learning programs can help address business demand for workers and workers' skills needs. For small- and mid-sized companies, however, there are often challenges to starting or running these programs. Businesses and communities across the country master these challenges by working together in industry or sector partnerships that bring together multiple employers in a targeted industry with the workforce, education, and human service systems to aggregate skills demands across firms and identify training and employment strategies that meet those shared needs.<sup>1</sup>

This brief discusses the important role local, industry-driven partnerships can play to align the workforce, education and human services systems and bring work-based learning to scale. It also highlights four partnerships that have broadened the pipeline of workers with access to work-based learning programs, meeting industry-demand for skilled workers and aligning workforce, education, and human services systems. In addition, the brief offers federal and state recommendations to scale these partnerships across the country.

INDUSTRY  
PARTNERSHIPS  
SHOULD BE



**ROBUST**



**INDUSTRY DRIVEN**



**LOCALLY BASED**



## Work-based learning can meet business and worker needs, but starting and running programs can be difficult for small and mid-sized companies.

Fifty-three percent of U.S. jobs are middle skill, meaning that they require some form of education and training beyond a high school diploma, but less than a four-year college degree. Yet, only 43 percent of U.S. workers are trained at this level. This disconnect limits economic growth as businesses across a range of industries cannot find the skilled workforce they need to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities and is a missed opportunity for millions of low-wage workers who could fill these better-paying positions with the right training and skills.

Work-based learning — including a spectrum of opportunities from apprenticeship and on-the-job training with a classroom component to paid fellowships and internships — brings structured learning into the workplace, helping new or existing workers build their skills over time while meeting the immediate workforce needs of business. Through a wide range of structured work-based learning, companies can develop qualified and loyal workers while

workers develop their skills, earn industry-recognized credentials, and receive higher wages.

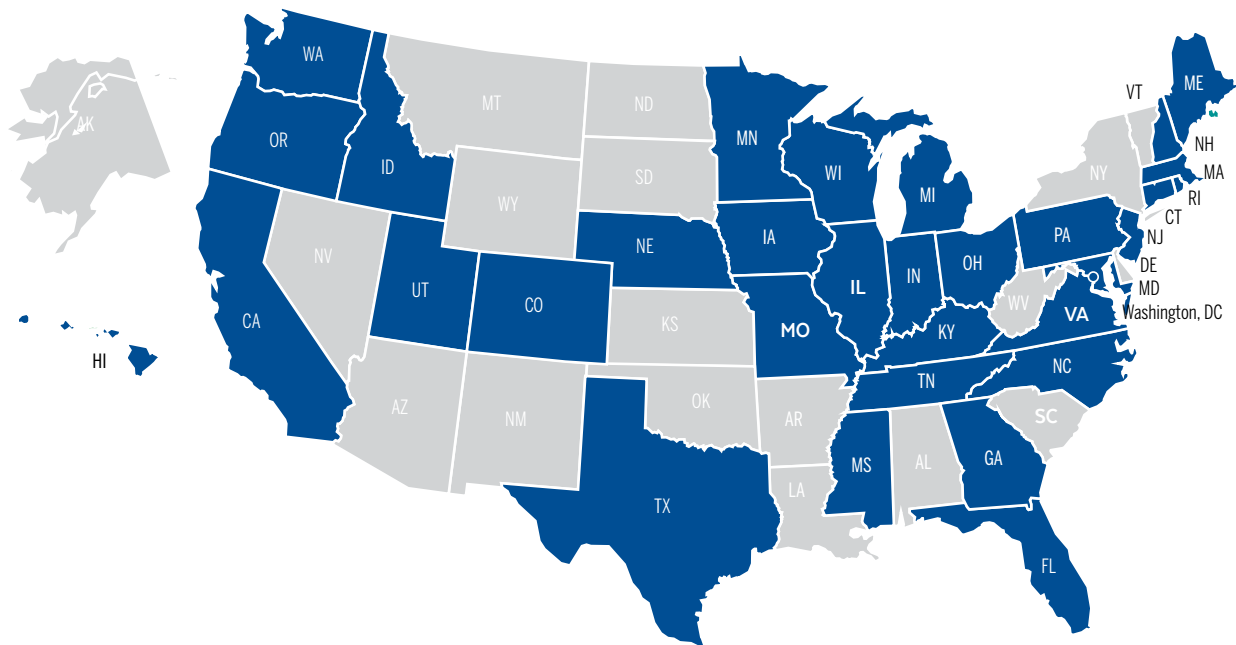
Despite these benefits, the startup costs of developing, implementing, and running work-based learning programs may be prohibitive, particularly for small- and mid-sized businesses.

- ◆ Companies without extensive workforce development expertise may be hesitant to invest in work-based learning programs without evidence of a good model in their industry sector and region;
- ◆ A company hiring only a few apprentices a year may not have internal capacity to develop and deliver curriculum for on-the-job training or benchmark assessments;
- ◆ Recruiting workers, assessing their basic education or skills needs, and aligning the start of their training with those needs may all be beyond the scope of a small company's expertise and capacity;
- ◆ Identifying, training, and supporting mentors for apprentices' on-the-job component can take expertise and time that a small Human Resources department may not have or adequately understand the importance of;
- ◆ Community and technical colleges often provide the training-related instruction for work-based learning programs, but it is far more efficient for a college to aggregate need across several businesses than customize training on an individual basis.
- ◆ An individual company starting a work-based learning program may not be familiar with potential supports available through their local workforce system or have relationships at human services or education agencies that can help them build on successful models and access financial incentives to make starting and running a program more feasible.
- ◆ Businesses, especially in a tight labor market, are increasingly hiring workers with lower skills levels or with less work experience than they have previously required. Without credentials or work experience to serve as a proxy for likely success in their firm, businesses may need the support of community partners to successfully recruit a diverse pipeline of workers likely to succeed in work-based learning programs.



*Gabby is a student at Portland Community College's Maritime Welding program, created in collaboration with Vigor, a large shipbuilding company in the Pacific Northwest*

## STATES WITH ESTABLISHED SECTOR PARTNERSHIP POLICIES



Source: [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Sector-Partnership-Scan.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Sector-Partnership-Scan.pdf)

- ◆ Retention – and providing the supports (such as addressing child care or transportation barriers, providing financial coaching and tools or uniforms needed to start on a jobsite) necessary for a broad pipeline of workers to succeed in work-based learning programs – can be vital to business’ ability to continue and expand work-based learning programs, but beyond their scope of expertise.

Small- and mid-sized businesses across the country are mastering these challenges, however, by working together in industry or sector partnerships. Industry partnerships bring together multiple employers in a targeted industry to aggregate skills demands across firms and identify training and employment strategies that meet those shared needs.

### Industry or sector partnerships as defined in WIOA and implemented in other federal legislation

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), local areas are required to create industry and sector partnerships to support state and local areas’ workforce development plans. As of 2017, twenty-nine states have policies that support creation or expansion of sector partnership policies.<sup>2</sup> The most recent reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act also includes a new reference to industry or sector partnerships and allows local areas to use funds to support their creation and operation. Recent bipartisan federal funding bills have

recognized the importance of industry or sector partnerships as foundations for expanding work-based learning and apprenticeship.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this burgeoning recognition of industry partnerships, no federal policy provides dedicated funding to support their expanded use and the widespread adoption of the practice is hindered by the lack of federal investment.

Industry or Sector Partnerships are workforce collaboratives comprised of key stakeholders in an industry. The partnership is a working group focused on identifying shared goals and needs of the industry in a local area. Partners include:

- ◆ Multiple business representatives, including those from small and mid-sized businesses
- ◆ Representatives from the state or local workforce development board
- ◆ At least one representative from higher education
- ◆ Representatives of labor organizations, when appropriate

While these entities must be involved at some point in the partnership, the definition intentionally leaves control of who and when each partner is engaged up to the local experts. Other partners can also be involved, depending on the needs of the local area, including other government and agency officials, business or trade associations, community-based organizations, and philanthropy.



## Industry or sector partnerships are industry-driven and locally-based collaborations between key workforce stakeholders that are embedded in the existing workforce and education systems

Industry or sector partnerships are intended to meet the industry demand of local areas and offer businesses of all sizes, and workers of all skill levels, the support necessary to take work-based learning to scale. While collaborations with businesses can take many forms, there are three key components of industry or sector partnerships that make the strategy vital to expanding quality work-based learning.

**Industry-driven:** Industry partnerships, as the name suggests, are partnerships convened by organizations interested in aligning workforce development programs – like work-based learning – with business and industry needs. Employers and businesses are in the unique position to provide information about their own workforce needs. Industry-driven partnerships enable industry representatives to share information about their workforce needs projections, skills and competencies necessary for success, and the current sources of their talent.

Partners start by analyzing an industry's current and future skill needs and identifying occupations with skill gaps before developing a plan to close these gaps. Identifying where and when businesses need workers, the skills workers need to have to start a work-based learning program, how those skills should progress over time, and the pathways to that skill development are all at the foundation of an industry partnership's goals.

While businesses do not typically convene industry partnerships, their leadership and engagement are essential to ensure the partnership develops strategies that are responsive to a local area's industry-specific workforce needs. Relationships forged by industry partners build trust between firms in an industry, enabling companies to learn from each other and apply strategies – like developing work-based learning programs – that have helped other neighboring industry partners successfully build a pipeline of workers.<sup>4</sup>

Ensuring partnerships are industry-driven maximizes their capacity to:

- ◆ Foster and create a community of business leaders engaged in a common goal of upskilling a local workforce in a strategic way that benefits the broader community;
- ◆ Help businesses work together to design curriculum and benchmarks of the on-the-job component of a program

or circulate best practices as well as training front-line workers and managers to aid their provision of mentoring or training.

**Aligned with and inclusive of other workforce, education, and human services systems:** Industry partnerships are comprised of representatives from local workforce boards, community colleges, chambers of commerce, community-based organizations, funder collaboratives and economic development organizations. These stakeholders are often involved in planning processes for the workforce system, career and technical education, elementary, secondary and postsecondary education, adult education, and human services programs. To take apprenticeship and work-based learning to scale for the most businesses – of all size and in all industries – and build the broadest pipeline of workers, local partnerships need to be aligned with and integrated into the broader workforce and education systems at the local and state levels. This integration ensures access to complementary funding streams that enable businesses to support work-based learning programs and ensure access and success for the broadest pipeline of workers. A community college partner could ensure access to funding available under Higher Education Act to pay for classroom instruction, a human services partner may enable a partnership to support the child care costs of apprentices, and the workforce system can contribute the workforce development expertise and alignment with the state's eligible training provider list. This partnership requires a convener familiar with industry needs as well as the capacity of the education and workforce systems, targeted resources and intentionally aligned planning processes. The convener ensures the roles of the partners are clearly defined and key interests are accounted for. Without this investment and alignment, work-based learning programs cannot leverage necessary federal or state investments that can maximize their impact for businesses and for workers.

Ensuring partnerships are aligned with and embedded in the workforce, education, and human service systems maximizes their capacity to:

- ◆ Link businesses with available subsidies, tax credits, and other incentives available to companies starting or expanding programs to ease financial barriers, particularly for small firms and for companies hiring workers with barriers to employment;
- ◆ Connect businesses with education providers to develop classroom instruction to complement on-the-job learning and enabling both education providers and multiple businesses to work together to develop mutually beneficial classroom curriculum;

- ◆ Recruit participants for the work-based learning programs, particularly individuals receiving additional workforce and human services, and identify pre-employment or pre-apprenticeship training needs, access integrated education and training that can ensure success in later work-based learning pathways and leverage the spectrum of training options available under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- ◆ Link to an organization to serve as employer of record during a transitional period for participants entering work-based learning programs, like a community college or community-based organization, to ensure businesses can smoothly ramp up work-based learning programming, especially for workers with the most barriers to their employment;
- ◆ Connect to and provide subsidies for transportation, child care services and other support services that ensure the broadest pipeline of workers not only have access to work-based learning but succeed in these programs; and
- ◆ Provide tools, clothing, and other required items workers need to start employment.

**Locally-based:** Implementing strategies to address businesses and worker needs is an inherently local process. The success of this strategy often hinges on the engagement of small or mid-sized businesses, relationships between the representatives of the education and workforce systems, the engagement and administration of agencies supporting human services policies, and the role of labor or industry associations in a certain community. National standards, credentials, and programs are crucial to industry partnerships' success, but no one model of partnership can be applied across the country and across industries. National organizations may play a key role in aggregating best practices, building networks and providing technical assistance. Industry and sector partnerships complement this work happening at the national level and in other communities with a laser focus on their own area and community.

Ensuring partnerships are locally-based maximizes their capacity to:

- ◆ Develop mentorship opportunities and supporting alumni associations based on capacity of local organizations;
- ◆ Create and deepen relationships with community organizations, training providers, and other interested groups in the community, to help connect the broadest pipeline of workers to work-based learning;



To take apprenticeship and work-based learning to scale for the most businesses – of all size and in all industries – and build the broadest pipeline of workers, local partnerships need to be aligned with and integrated into the broader workforce and education systems at the local and state levels.

- ◆ Tailoring training, support, and employment opportunities to the region in which businesses operate – both in response to local demand and as an outgrowth of local relationships.

## Case Studies

**Successful industry partnerships exist across the country in various industries. Below are just a few examples that have enabled communities and businesses to expand work-based learning opportunities for a diverse pipeline of workers, better meeting business need and putting workers on the pathway to good jobs. Each of these partnerships is industry-driven, connected to the larger workforce, education and human services systems, locally based, and working to expand work-based learning opportunities.**



## CASE STUDY

### WORK-BASED LEARNING ON-RAMPS TO HEALTH CARE APPRENTICESHIPS

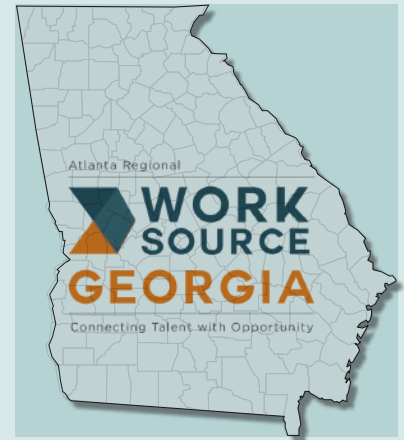
#### WorkSource Metro Atlanta Healthcare Industry Partnership

**Industry-Driven:** Convened by WorkSource Metro Atlanta, a coalition of five workforce boards and Atlanta CareerRise, a regional funders collaborative, part of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions network and part of the United Way of Greater Atlanta, the Healthcare Industry Partnership has brought together the largest health care industry association in the area and several health care employers from across metro Atlanta. WorkSource Metro Atlanta and Atlanta CareerRise also convene similar partnerships in information technology and transportation, distribution and logistics. The healthcare partnership convenes both an industry council, comprised of businesses in the healthcare industry, and a workforce partners council, comprised of workforce experts, community and technical college representatives, community organizations, and more than eighteen state agency partners that interact with potential participants and can support their success, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) administrators. Business partners help identify workforce needs and play an active role in training program development, including advising on curriculum content and sharing screening criteria to align training program content with their needs. Employer partners often conduct mock interviews, provide job site tours, and speak to students during classroom learning portions of training.

**Alignment with broader workforce, education, and human services systems:** Convened in partnership with five local workforce boards, the partnership also brings together representatives from eight technical colleges and seven school districts. The partnership leverages Goodwill of North Georgia's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) funding, targeting SNAP recipients to access initial training on the work-based learning pathway.

**Locally-based:** Partners began initial formation in 2016 to collaboratively aggregate and address healthcare employers' demand for middle-skill workers. The partnership expanded in size and scope after investment from the governor in 2018 through the High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI). After detailed analysis of the state workforce needs through HDCI, Georgia officials recognized variation in

workforce demand at the local level and implemented a focus that supported partnerships in local economic development regions across the state responding to local employer demand. The partnership encourages collaboration across the partner network and facilitates innovative approaches to workforce development, including work to expand healthcare work-based learning pathways.



**Expanding work-based learning:** To address the shortage of entry and mid-level hospital workers, including Environmental Technicians and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), the partnership, working with Goodwill of North Georgia as the "lead partner," launched an Environmental Services Technician pre-employment training program. During eight weeks of training, participants learn in the classroom four days a week, with one day each week spent on the hospital floor either shadowing workers, applying techniques learned in the classroom, or meeting with hospital administrators.

SNAP E&T or WIOA funding from the local WorkSource board support participant training costs. During their training and for ten months after completing the program, participants have access to career counseling and mentorship through Goodwill to help them address any barriers to their retention on the job, such as help accessing childcare during night shifts. Those who have been hired by employer partners continue in on-the-job training provided through the employer partner. After completing the program, participants are guaranteed interviews with members of the industry council and receive up to a year of career counseling to ensure access to industry employment. After six months of successful employment, participants are eligible to sit for their Certified Health Environment Services Technician (CHEST) certificate and have access to coaching and scholarships through Goodwill to shepherd them through that process. In 2019, the partnership will launch programs targeting unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers who are interested in becoming Certified Nursing Assistants, Patient Care Technicians, Licensed Practical Nurses, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Paramedics through two pre-employment training programs and two apprenticeship programs.





## PARTNERING TO MANUFACTURE WORK-BASED LEARNING SUCCESS:

### Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center Training (OMIC Training)

**Industry-driven:** Modeled on Boeing's training center in the United Kingdom, OMIC Training is an industry partnership workforce training center led by Portland Community College (PCC) with representatives from multiple businesses, including Boeing and other large businesses as well as smaller and mid-sized manufacturers in the area.<sup>5</sup>

**Aligned with workforce and education systems:** In addition to the business partners, PCC brings together K-12 school districts, four-year universities in the state, representatives from labor including those from Joint Apprenticeship Training Centers, representatives from the workforce system and community organizations working with recipients of TANF and SNAP to link those workers with skills training and employment opportunities through the OMIC Training.

**Locally-based:** The partnerships forged in the creation of OMIC are formalized versions of those that existed before the center. Building on existing relationships will enable PCC to tailor training to meet a broad range of both worker and business needs, including those of small and mid-sized companies with whom coordination often takes a longer time to implement because staff is pulled in many different directions and training may typically be provided – and developed – on an ad hoc basis.

**Expanding work-based learning:** As a founding partner, PCC is in the process of aligning efforts to recruit workers for OMIC Training with the Oregon Community College SNAP 50/50 Consortia, a collaboration of fourteen community colleges and the state Department of Human Services. Through the PCC-led consortium, colleges provide SNAP recipients with coaching in their career pathways program and

scholarships to pay for tuition, books, tools, and equipment they need for the structured on-the-job component of the program. One such pathway, the Maritime Welding program, was created in collaboration with

Vigor, a large pacific northwest shipbuilder. During training, participants learn onsite in the Vigor shipyards from faculty who have worked in the industry, many of whom are also employed by Vigor. Employers offer class presentations, tours, mock interviews, and participating in career fairs. The pathway culminates in two stackable Career Pathway Certificates and multiple industry recognized credentials. Students attend a career fair after graduation to network with hiring employers, including Vigor. The program has an 80 percent completion rate, and 78 percent of completing students have been hired in the industry with a starting wage of \$19 an hour. Vigor is also a partner in OMIC Training, and by building on the maritime welding pathway, PCC will create a training course that helps participants build on existing skills to reach the level necessary for the certified welders to transition to apprenticeship programs to be offered through OMIC Training. This approach will increase diversity in the field and create access to careers offering economic mobility, critical to the students served in the SNAP 50/50 project.



*Virtual welding at Oregon  
Manufacturing Training Center*



## CASE STUDY

### BUILDING APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION:

#### UpSkill Houston

**Industry-driven:** In 2014 the Greater Houston Partnership, with support of its 1,200 business members, launched UpSkill Houston.<sup>6</sup> The initiative serves as a backbone to convene representatives from businesses, industry associations, education providers, workforce agencies, and community-based organizations to address the skills gap in the region's in-demand industries including healthcare, construction, port and maritime, energy, and petrochemical manufacturing. The focus is on careers and occupations that require education beyond a high school diploma and less than a four-year college degree.

**Aligned with workforce, education, and human services systems:** Over the past five years, UpSkill Houston has followed a formulaic, but adaptable, model to build out industry councils in the region's key industries. Staff housed at the Greater Houston Partnership initially bring together industry partners from small, mid-size, and large companies to identify the demand for critical occupations, the skills and competency needs, and the training challenges. Later, education providers, representatives from the workforce system, and other community partners like United Way of Greater Houston are brought into the council as the conversations with industry partners progress. In one program targeting women's access to construction careers, United Way partnered with the local workforce board to recruit and screen participants with barriers to employment who, with support from services provided by the workforce development system and community organizations, can be successful in

member companies' training programs. The partnership has also connected local companies' incumbent workers with opportunities to work with K-12 and community college students as classroom instructors.

**Locally-based:** The

Greater Houston Partnership serves as the hub of the industry relationships that make this partnership work. Staff have built long-term relationships with community organizations like United Way of Greater Houston and the workforce board which enables the Partnership to direct businesses towards organizations that can best support their workforce needs, meaning the business partner has a reliable recommendation on which to build a relationship and support efficient workforce planning.

**Expanding work-based learning:** In 2017, S&B Engineers and Constructors launched a twelve-week hire and then learn program to enable more women and workers living within the Houston area to enter their workforce development programs. These efforts came out of a desire to broaden the pipeline and diversity of craft workers who could succeed in the construction workforce and to reduce expenses the company incurred supporting workers brought in from other regions of the state and country to meet the workforce needs.

United Way THRIVE partners provide financial literacy and employability skills training, partnering with the local workforce board to recruit participants in the program. S&B provides skills education to prepare workers for several

occupations including pipefitting and welding. S&B recently opened a new craft education and skills enhancement center dedicated to preparing workers for middle-skill jobs, and the company partnered with other UpSkill Houston employer partners to identify incoming and incumbent workers from their companies to participate in training at the S&B site. United Way has also worked with TDIndustries, a mechanical contractor, to replicate the women in construction program for their workforce.



*Participants in S&B Engineers and Constructors program learn from industry experts.*





## WORK-BASED LEARNING THROUGH THE ADVANCING MANUFACTURING PARTNERSHIP

**Industry-driven:** Convened by Indiana's Region 4 Workforce Investment Board,<sup>7</sup> Advancing Manufacturing Partnership launched in 2012 with more than twenty advanced manufacturing businesses as members including Subaru Automotive of Indiana, Kirby Risk, AdKev, Ball Corp., and Caterpillar. Industry partners identify their future workforce needs and partner with the workforce board, education and human services partners to train and support workers to fill this need.

**Aligned with workforce, education, and human services systems:** Purdue Polytechnic, and the Lafayette and Kokomo Ivy Tech Colleges provide instruction for the partnership's training, including their work-based learning cohorts. WorkOne West Central Indiana, economic development organizations, and community groups along with Kokomo, Lafayette, and Monticello city government representatives also participate, ensuring the approach aligns with economic development outcome goals for the cities and counties covered by the partnership. As the recipient of WIOA funds, the board is able to co-enroll training participants under their Department of Labor (DOL) grants in WIOA to leverage individual training account funds and funding for support services like transportation subsidies and gear for the worksite.

**Locally-based:** Industry partners represent a combination of companies with national reach and those based primarily in the partnership's target region. The partnership began analysis of workforce needs based on the Strategic Skills Initiative, a state effort in Indiana to identify skill shortages and workforce solutions to those shortages that started at the state level and was designed to provide workforce local areas with necessary analysis to launch industry or sector partnerships at the local level.<sup>8</sup> Relationships forged by workforce and education stakeholders enabled this region to respond quickly to advanced manufacturing needs identified during the Strategic Skills Initiative.

**Expanding work-based learning:** The partnership has been supported by multiple national DOL grants, relying on the funding to cover administrative costs of running the partnership as well as pre-employment training costs. Since 2014, 723 participants have completed advanced manufacturing pre-employment training programs funded through one DOL program, Ready to Work, which targets long-term unemployed adults. Of those, 686 were hired after their training and 125 received structured on-the-job training supported by their employer as a first step in their employment. The partnership also subsidizes wages

for participants for four to twelve-week paid internships, designed to be a pathway to long-term employment with the employer with whom they are hired. Average starting wages in the internships are \$14.



*A student, Morgan, gets on-the-job training with JD Dent Repair in Indiana*

While apprenticeship investments have been significant in recent years, they are dwarfed by the amount invested in workforce development, higher education, and safety net programming broadly. A lack of alignment between apprenticeship investments and these other systems is a missed opportunity to leverage the billions the federal government invests in these programs to support the expansion of apprenticeship and work-based learning.

### **Federal policy should support the expansion of industry partnerships to take work-based learning to scale**

No current federal policy adequately supports industry and sector partnerships to expand work-based learning. While WIOA requires the implementation of industry or sector partnerships, it includes no dedicated funding. The newly reauthorized Career and Technical Education Act also allows local funds to be used to support industry partnerships, but this funding will be stretched among several priorities as states implement the new law. The administration has supported “sector-based” work-based learning partnerships under a recent request for proposals, but these grants would not require the connection to the workforce system that is at the foundation of industry and sector partnerships.

Some states, like Georgia, have invested their WIOA Governor’s Reserve funds to expand industry partnerships, but this approach is unsustainable as those funds are overstretched and rely on the strategy being a priority for a current Governor. Others, like Indiana and Oregon, used one-time federal grants to support this work, without sustainability of consistent federal investment. UpSkill Houston relies on financial support from philanthropy and businesses for initial start-up and operating costs, but not all areas of the country have the existing infrastructure to enable this investment without the initial support a federal commitment can provide.

The federal government has made significant investment in apprenticeship in recent years, yet none of these adequately targets funding to industry partnerships at the level necessary to scale work-based learning to meet business demand and worker skill needs. Some investments support individual organizations, workers, or national experts, but no investment has targeted the partnership capacity at the local level that is imbedded in the workforce, education, and human services systems in which the federal government relies – and invests – to train, educate, and serve U.S. workers and businesses. While apprenticeship investments have been significant in recent years, they are dwarfed by the amount invested in workforce development, higher

education, and safety net programming broadly. A lack of alignment between apprenticeship investments and these other systems is a missed opportunity to leverage the billions the federal government invests in these programs to support the expansion of apprenticeship and work-based learning.

Industry partnerships are essential for the long-term growth and competitiveness of a region. Strong industry partnerships provide critical information to workforce partners and improve relationships between businesses and industry and the education, workforce, and human service systems that can support work-based learning and the development of a skilled workforce. These partnerships create stronger alignment between education and industry and improve overall effectiveness and performance of education, workforce, and human service systems.

To take apprenticeship and work-based learning to scale, state and federal policymakers must support industry and sector partnerships.

### **Federal policy recommendations:**

#### ***Target Technical Skills Training Grant Program funds to industry partnerships to expand work-based learning.***

Under current law, businesses are required to pay a fee to the federal government for each foreign worker hired. Half of the fees collected for these H-1B visas are allocated to the DOL to support innovative training strategies that help businesses train U.S. workers for the jobs for which businesses have previously hired foreign workers under the Technical Skills Training Grant Program. The Trump administration used this funding to support partnerships between community colleges and businesses to expand work-based learning. While largely consistent with work done by an industry or sector partnership, grantees were not required to link their projects to the broader workforce system.

Previous administrations have used Technical Skills Training Grants to support a variety of training programs, meaning local partnerships or organization are not able to rely on the support for long-term planning. Under the G.W. Bush administration, DOL supported the Workforce Innovation in

Regional Economic Development initiative, which brought together economic and workforce development entities and the Technology-Based Learning program. The Obama administration used this funding to support the America's Promise Job Driven Grant Program, Strengthening Working Families Initiative, and TechHire Partnership Grants. Each of these programs has a laudable goal and brought together a variety of partners in local areas to expand access to skills and meet business demand. Because administrations have broad discretion in how to spend these grants, however, local areas are unable to plan for future investments key to sustainability of the gains achieved under the grant.

Congress should require additional parameters to the use of Technical Skills Training Grants that allocate funds, with state involvement, to support local industry partnerships' work to expand access to a spectrum of work-based learning opportunities for a diverse pipeline of workers.

***Provide federal support for state investment in local, industry-driven partnerships with a focus on expanding work-based learning.***

In addition to Technical Skills Training grants, Congress has appropriated more than \$400 million to DOL to expand apprenticeship over the past few years. Most of this funding has gone to states to support innovative expansion strategies, with relatively few restrictions on how states spend this allocation outside of the focus on apprenticeship.

Congress should require future investments be targeted to industry or sector partnerships that expand access to apprenticeship. Building on recognition in funding bills of the importance of industry or sector partnerships in expanding apprenticeship, Congress should direct appropriated apprenticeship funding to industry or sector partnerships as defined under WIOA.

For already appropriated dollars, DOL should provide guidance to help states spend this money to support industry partnerships as a mechanism to enable apprenticeship expansion. DOL should issue guidance under WIOA on the role industry partnerships can play in expanding apprenticeship, and guidance to states on best practices for using their current and future apprenticeship funds to empower local industry and sector partnerships to expand apprenticeship.

***Integrate industry and sector partnerships into upcoming reauthorizations of education and safety net programs.***

Upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act offers the opportunity to enhance the educational system's capacity to partner not only with individual businesses, but with multiple businesses, the workforce system and other stakeholders in an industry partnership. Congress should create a new permanent program to support industry-community college partnerships at the federal level, modeled

The federal government has made significant investment in apprenticeship in recent years, yet none of these adequately targets funding to industry partnerships at the level necessary to scale work-based learning to meet business demand and worker skill needs.



*Students learn how an automated millturn works on machining projects at OMIC training center*



on the success of previous investments like the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program. TAACCCT funding supported students' ability to earn more than 320,000 industry-recognized credentials at more than 700 community colleges over the four years it was funded. During Higher Education Act reauthorization, Congress should provide targeted funds to successful industry or sector partnerships leading to improved engagement with industry partners and the workforce system for community and technical colleges.<sup>9</sup>

Upcoming Temporary Aid for Needy Families reauthorization also offers Congress the opportunity to support industry partnerships to improve access to work-based learning for low-wage individuals. Industry partnerships that engage TANF administrators can offer recipients new training opportunities and offer businesses a broader pipeline of workers. Conflicting outcome requirements have historically made it difficult for the workforce system to serve TANF recipients, however. Along with updating outcome measures, Congress should provide dedicated funding to support stronger alignment of TANF programs with sector partnerships, with a focus on industries and occupations that offer a career pathway that will help TANF recipients achieve self-sufficiency.

## **State policy recommendations:**

### ***Utilize state sector partnership policies to expand work-based learning.***

As of 2017, thirty-two states had policies in place to support local sector partnerships through funding, technical assistance, or other state initiatives. States can use their networks of existing local sector partnerships to expand work-based learning to workers and businesses in communities across their state. States that already provide

funding and technical assistance to local sector partnerships can target additional funds and technical assistance to help those partnerships expand their role in supporting work-based learning. States that do not have a sector partnership policy in place can adopt one and incorporate work-based learning focus into the activities of local sector partnerships from the beginning.

### ***Leverage WIOA planning to integrate work-based learning into state sector partnership policies.***

Every four years, states must develop a new state workforce plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This planning process provides states with a chance to develop or modify key strategies, such as sector partnerships, required by WIOA and other federal policies. As states use the WIOA planning process to shape their sector partnership policies, they should prioritize the use of WIOA funds, technical assistance, and guidance to help sector partnerships support work-based learning programs.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Ensure that sector partnerships' work-based learning priorities align with and leverage other state training efforts across workforce, education, and human services agencies.***

State administration and planning for SNAP E&T, TANF, and Career and Technical Education efforts offer a further opportunity to align industry or sector partnership efforts with the funding and supports available to participants through those programs. Aligning industry or sector partnerships that support work-based learning with other state efforts can allow participants to access support services, career and other mentoring, and funds to support training opportunities that can enable the broadest pipeline of workers to have success in work-based learning programs.

# Endnotes

- 1 Andy Van Kleunen, Employer Engagement Policy: Shifting from Customers to Partnerships, Investing in America's Workforce Vol. 3: Investing in Systems for Employment Opportunity, Stuart Andreason et. al eds (2018) <https://www.investinwork.org/-/media/Files/volume-three/Volume%203%20-%20Investing%20in%20Systems%20for%20Employment%20Opportunity.pdf?la=en>
- 2 Bryan Wilson, National Skills Coalition, Sector Partnership Policy 50-State Scan <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Sector-Partnership-Scan.pdf> (2017)
- 3 <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/senate-appropriations-committee-advances-labor-hhs-bill-with-increased-funding-for-apprenticeship-and-adult-basic-education>
- 4 See Bryan Wilson, Sector Partnership Policy 50-State Scan (2017) for a primer on industry or sector partnerships under WIOA and a comprehensive scan of state policies and funding that supports these partnerships. <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Sector-Partnership-Scan.pdf>
- 5 [www.omic.us/announcements](http://www.omic.us/announcements)
- 6 For more information about UpSkill Houston, see [www.upskillhouston.org](http://www.upskillhouston.org)
- 7 [www.region4workforceboard.org/projects-initiatives/advancing-manufacturing/](http://www.region4workforceboard.org/projects-initiatives/advancing-manufacturing/)
- 8 [incap.org/documents/Sector-Partnerships-final-high-resolution.pdf](http://incap.org/documents/Sector-Partnerships-final-high-resolution.pdf)
- 9 [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/new-report-makes-the-case-for-partnerships-between-businesses-and-community-colleges](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/new-report-makes-the-case-for-partnerships-between-businesses-and-community-colleges)
- 10 Bryan Wilson, National Skills Coalition, Sector Partnership Policy 50-State Scan <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Sector-Partnership-Scan.pdf> (2017)



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