



Recommendations for a Fully Funded and Transformed Workforce Development System

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About Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

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About JFF's Language Choices

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Executive Summary

The U.S. postsecondary education and workforce development systems are in need of transformation. In an ever-evolving economy, where the skills that are required to drive growth are continually changing, workers and employers alike need well-funded, agile, equitable, easily navigable, and effective skills development systems.

At Jobs for the Future (JFF), we've embraced an ambitious goal as our North Star: In 10 years, 75 million people facing systemic barriers to advancement will work in quality jobs. We believe an overhaul of the U.S. workforce development and postsecondary education systems is essential to achieving that goal. In this brief, we urge policymakers to pursue 10 legislative and regulatory strategies to help achieve the transformation we envision—and put millions more people on pathways to quality jobs.

Here's a summary of JFF's policy recommendations to transform workforce development in the United States:

- **Create a lifelong learning system** that increases funding for skills development, transforms the structure and delivery of education and training, and expands sector-focused career pathways and other evidence-based models.
- **Ensure that U.S. workers are protected during times of transition** by reforming unemployment insurance programs to include expanded eligibility for benefits.
- **Adopt measures for verifying the quality of education and training programs** as demand for short-term learning options increases among workers who need to continually build new skills to keep pace with the demands of the labor market.
- **Encourage employers to engage more substantively** in the design and delivery of occupation-focused programs and in the training and education of their own frontline workers.
- **Ensure that education and skills development efforts are focused on quality jobs** in growing industries that offer the most opportunity for economic advancement in state and regional economies.
- **Improve outcomes for people who face barriers to education and employment** by creating conditions that put them in a better position to succeed in attaining the skills and credentials they need for quality jobs.
- **Increase investments in and programming for "opportunity youth"**—young people who aren't in school and aren't working—with the goal of supporting programs that create strong bridges between education and employment; address the need for affordable, high-quality postsecondary education and training; and offer paid work experiences.
- **Increase investments in the U.S. workforce** at levels that create pathways to economic advancement for all workers by enabling them to build the skills that U.S. employers are seeking.
- **Make the changes required** to modernize the nation's workforce development system and transform the delivery of education and training in ways that reduce the time workers and learners spend in the classroom and enable them to earn valuable workforce credentials quickly.
- **Develop a robust career navigation system** that helps students, parents, jobseekers, and workers make well-informed decisions about the education, career, and employment pathways they choose.