

Talking points for advocates: Investing in Skills for an Inclusive Economic Recovery

Below are talking points/guides for meetings between workforce stakeholders and Capitol Hill staff and members of Congress about workforce investment and priorities in the next stimulus package, and investment more broadly in the long-term.

Goal of these meetings/talking points

- Communicate to Congressional staff and members of Congress the importance of investing in skills training and workforce as part of an inclusive economic recovery.
- Urge Congress to invest in workforce as a part of a future stimulus in the immediate future, and generally in the long term.
- Relationship building between key stakeholders in the workforce world and your member of Congress

Main Messages

1. The new Congress and the Biden administration must invest in skills training/workforce now because it's essential to an inclusive economic recovery.
2. Investments in job creation will only be effective if we *train* people for those jobs.
3. Building Back Better means including everyone, especially those hurting the most, in opportunities to train for newly created jobs in infrastructure and new industries and technologies.

Issue Asks

Congress needs to invest in skills training / workforce as an essential part of an inclusive economic recovery.

Ask 1: Invest in re-training/reskilling & support to every person who's lost their job because of the Covid-19 pandemic

America Agrees: 82% of voters support immediate increased public investments in skills training to help people laid off in industries hit hard by the coronavirus and 81% support continuing to increase investment in skills training long-term

When the pandemic subsides, workers who lost their jobs won't necessarily be able to return to the same companies, occupations, or industries. They'll have to look for and maybe train for something new - especially if they want a good-paying job. But investments in skills training have been cut by nearly 40% over the last two decades and our current investments in unemployment and reemployment programs only enable about 5% of all workers who lose their jobs to access comprehensive reemployment services. There will be many more people who need training than there are resources to train them. Our workforce and education systems

can connect workers to skills training that leads to good jobs - but we need to invest today to make that possible.

Ask 2: Upskill workers who are still on the job so they can maintain employment and advance in their industry

America Agrees: 82% of voters believe the government should offer incentives for businesses to use downtime for training instead of laying off workers and 84% of voters want to see public investment in expanding access to digital learning and increasing digital literacy.

Nearly 1/3 of our workforce lacks digital skills. 36 million need access to basic literacy and numeracy skills. Most of these workers are employed by small and medium businesses that don't have the staff or expertise to develop internal training programs or the capital to pay for training. And, small businesses are less familiar with how to navigate public training support and connect their workers to the skills training and education they need. We need to invest in upskilling and incumbent worker training to keep workers on the job and minimize further job loss

Ask 3: Support partnerships between local businesses and local training programs so that training really leads to an in-demand job

America Agrees: 88% of voters want public investment in partnerships between skills training programs and local businesses to help train people for the jobs for which businesses are hiring.

Some industries, like restaurant, retail, and hospitality ground to a halt during the pandemic and hundreds of thousands of workers were laid off. Other industries, particularly industries connected to pandemic response, thrived - but struggled to find workers trained with specific, in-demand skills. Industry partnerships connect local businesses looking for talent with local training programs so when people get training, there's a real job waiting. Eighty-eight percent of voters want public investment in these critical partnerships, but currently there is no federal investment to support them. Congress should invest in industry partnerships as part of any response to the current crisis.

Ask 4: Invest in training for workers who want to fill new infrastructure jobs in their own communities

America Agrees: 89% of voters want any infrastructure plan to include investments in training so that local residents can access these jobs.

Federal investments in physical, digital, and clean energy infrastructure, as well as in public health capacity, could create millions of good jobs. For the millions of workers who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic — many of them low-income workers of color in the restaurant, hospitality, or retail sectors — job creation proposals must include training that ensures workers can access those jobs. Eighty-nine percent of voters want any infrastructure plan to include investments in training so that local residents can fill new positions.