

Workforce Development Priorities



Congress has an important opportunity in the 118th Congress to reauthorize and thoughtfully reform two major pieces of federal workforce development legislation—the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA). Current law authorizes a system of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), but it has not been updated in nearly a century. At the same time, we believe that a comprehensive update to the nation’s federally funded workforce system can ensure that more learners of all ages can access the education, training and support services necessary to secure family-sustaining employment.

Toward these important goals, we encourage Congress to consider the following in any effort to renew and update WIOA and NAA:

- Promote reciprocal alignment between WIOA and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) to develop a truly seamless education and workforce development ecosystem that provides pathways to opportunity for all learners. This should include alignment of state and local planning processes as well as CTE representation within workforce governance structures.
- Provide dedicated funding for the maintenance and upkeep of the workforce system’s infrastructure costs.
- Balance the education and training needs of both in-school and out-of-school youth populations based on actual state and local needs, rather than a federal mandate.
- Update federal policies to align with the actual needs of the labor market, including promoting a greater focus on the skills and competencies that are needed in today’s economy while providing the necessary space for innovative approaches to workforce development.
- Increase alignment and coordination between federally funded programs to increase training opportunities.
- Balance the requirements placed on training providers to ensure reporting and administrative burdens do not limit providers’ willingness to engage with the federally funded workforce system while still maintaining quality assurance provisions that ensure publicly funded training truly leads to opportunity within the economy.
- Significantly improve data system capacity, transparency and usage both to improve systems themselves and to provide learners and workers with the information they need to make informed decisions regarding their futures.
- Maintain common performance measures across programs to ensure that all federally funded activities are working toward shared goals.
- Increase the resources available to Area Technical Centers and Community and Technical Colleges to provide more opportunities for learners and workers.
- Formalize definitions and expectations for all apprenticeship activities, including pre- and youth-apprenticeship programs to provide clearer points of connection between systems of education and workforce development.
- Promote the expansion of apprenticeship programs into nontraditional sectors of the economy and for populations of learners and workers that are currently underrepresented within these programs.