
SKILLS FOR GOOD JOBS AGENDA: THE BLUEPRINT

The *Skills for Good Jobs Agenda* includes eight visionary proposals as well as specific, measurable targets that can be achieved by the conclusion of the next president's first term (2020).



Photo courtesy of
Pima Community College,
Tucson, Arizona

Coordination and Accountability through a White House Skills Cabinet

Achieving the ambitious, long-term goals in this Agenda will require coordination across a range of federal programs and agencies. In the first 100 days, the next president should establish a White House Skills Cabinet based in the Office of the Vice President. The Skills Cabinet would ensure that federal agencies are working in a coordinated fashion and would track progress toward the eight measurable goals outlined below.

1. A National Infrastructure of Regional Industry Workforce Partnerships

If our nation's investments in skills are intended, in part, to ensure access to good jobs, then these investments must happen with the full involvement of local employers who create and hire for those jobs. These local employers comprise the regional industries upon which our future economic growth depends. We must invest in industry partnerships in every region, to add the voice of small- and medium-sized businesses to that of larger local firms in their sector, and to provide a platform whereby they can help develop workforce education and training strategies in partnership with local high schools, colleges, labor unions, workforce boards and community organizations.

2020 GOAL: America will have a national infrastructure of some 1,200 industry workforce partnerships in targeted sectors in every workforce planning region in the nation.

2. A Job-Driven Community College Compact for Today's Students

America's community and technical colleges play a critical and growing role in ensuring workers and employers have the skills to compete. But our federal policies are not structured to support these institutions or the students they serve. We've treated community colleges as gap-fillers between the traditional K-12 and higher education systems even as more students pass through their halls, and more local employers are engaged by their technical training programs. It's time to establish a new federal policy that invests in partnerships between community colleges and community employers, supports programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials, and allows today's students to obtain skills for the jobs of tomorrow.

2020 GOAL: America will have a new federal policy—the Community College Compact—that provides dedicated financial aid for working students, industry-responsive investments in career and technical education programs, support services for working students, and accountability measures that track employment and wage gains to ensure that investments lead to results.

3. One Working Apprentice for Every Four Full-Time College Students

We have the greatest higher education system in the world—that is, for those who want to be a full-time student pursuing a traditional four-year degree. But for those who need to work and earn a living, or who would rather learn on the job versus just in a classroom, our education policies allow fewer options than countries where apprenticeship and work-based learning are a common pathway to a skilled career. Apprenticeship allows workers to support themselves and their families while earning a license or postsecondary credential. Some call apprenticeship “the ‘other college’—without the debt.” Yet we have barely one working apprentice for every 40 full-time college students—a fraction of the wage-earning options available to young people and working adults in other parts of the world.

2020 GOAL: The U.S. will institute new policies—directed at both students/workers and businesses—to support the development of five million new apprentices, the equivalent of one working apprentice for every four full-time college students.

4. An Upskilling Guarantee for America’s Frontline Workers

Tens of millions of hard working people in frontline, entry level jobs have never had the opportunity to refresh or upgrade their skills as their industries change around them. Some may not have the foundational literacy and numeracy skills to enter a community college or training program even if they had a chance to do so. As a nation we strive to give more students a pathway to college or credentials. But what about the millions of working men and women who want the option to raise their skills and incomes, but who cannot because we’ve done virtually nothing to help them keep their reading, math or language skills up to date? We should offer every working age person a basic upskilling guarantee: The chance to improve the foundational academic skills needed to train for a higher skilled job.

2020 GOAL: Six million individuals will be able to use the resources available through a new Upskilling Guarantee to build their foundational literacy or numeracy skills and obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

5. Integrating America’s Growing Immigrant Workforce

Immigrants represent more than one in seven American workers, but the absence of a national immigrant integration policy has prevented many from fully contributing to the economy. Comprehensive immigration reform, if passed, will provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. But simply providing individuals with a work permit doesn’t guarantee full economic integration and participation. Any immigration policy must be accompanied by a forward thinking skills strategy that is inclusive of U.S. born workers as well as newcomers. We can’t leave talent on the table, and that means making sure that every new American has a realistic chance to learn English, bolster their foundational skills, and pursue occupational training that will allow them to earn a family sustaining wage.

2020 GOAL: Six million immigrant youth and adults will have expanded access to English language and skill-building opportunities leading to improved employment outcomes.

6. Welfare to Careers: A Skills-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction

It has been said that the best anti-poverty program is a job. A better anti-poverty program is a good job, or even better, a career—specifically, a career that can support a family and provides opportunities for advancement. We should align and strengthen our nation’s public assistance programs to provide meaningful education and training opportunities, so that low-income individuals who are able to work can get and keep family supporting jobs.

2020 GOAL: Guarantee that anyone receiving federal public assistance can choose to participate in high-quality training to obtain an industry-recognized credential. Provide sufficient supports to enable those who are able to work to sustain employment over time.

7. Building a Diverse Workforce to Rebuild our Nation’s Infrastructure

As we invest in the country’s roads, bridges, rail and public transit; expand affordable broadband; advance energy infrastructure; and improve dams and levees, we must simultaneously invest in the skilled workforce necessary to build this vital infrastructure. Each billion dollars spent on infrastructure produces between 13,000 and 27,800 jobs. But if we want this job creation to pay off for American families and the economy as a whole, we must build a diverse pipeline of workers with the skills to access these in-demand opportunities.

2020 GOAL: A diverse set of three million new and existing workers will be trained for middle-skill infrastructure jobs.

8. Smart Data for a 21st Century Skilled Workforce

For many Americans, education is one of the biggest investments of time and money they will ever make. Car consumers can find out how well different makes and models perform and comparison shop to get a good value. Data is available to help make that decision. But students and workers trying to upgrade their skills don’t have information to comparison shop between schools and programs. Similarly, federal and state leaders don’t have information to make sure that tax dollars are supporting programs that actually help people get good jobs and grow our economy. We can take action to make sure people—from students to governors to small business owners—have the information they need to prosper in a 21st century economy.

2020 GOAL: All states and the federal government will have data systems in place to measure how well education and training programs are preparing skilled workers for the 21st century economy.

SKILLS FOR GOOD JOBS AGENDA: ONE YEAR LATER

In November 2016, NSC released *Skills for Good Jobs Agenda*, which included eight visionary proposals as well as measurable targets that could be achieved by 2020. The following demonstrates progress toward fulfilling this agenda as of September 2017.

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| 1. A National Infrastructure of Regional Industry Workforce Partnerships | CC2CF Act, BUILDS Act, PARTNERS Act, Apprenticeship Executive Order
See descriptions below. |
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| 2. A Job-Driven Community College Compact for Today's Students | |
| <i>Dedicated financial aid for working students</i> | JOBS Act (S.206)
<i>Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH)</i>
Would expand access to Pell Grants for short-term occupational credentials. Adopted as part of Congressional Democrats HEA proposal. |
| <i>Industry-responsive investments in CTE</i> | Community College to Career Fund (CC2CF) Act (S. 620, H.R. 2207)
<i>Senators Franken (D-MN) and Duckworth (D-IL), Rep. Kelly (D-IL)</i>
Supports investments in community college industry partnerships. |
| <i>Support services for working students</i> | Gateway to Career Fund Act
<i>Senator Hassan (D-NH)</i>
To support career pathway efforts including IET under HEA. To be introduced late 2017. |
| <i>Accountability to track employment, wage gains</i> | College Transparency Act (S. 1121, H.R. 2434)
<i>Senators Hatch (R-UT) and Warren (D-MA), Rep. Mitchell (R-MI) and Polis (D-CO)</i>
Would enable public reporting on college outcomes, including completion, employment. |
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| 3. One Working Apprentice for Every Four Full-Time College Students | PARTNERS Act
<i>Senator Baldwin (D-WI) and Rep. Bonamici (D-OR)</i>
Expands the role of intermediaries to take apprenticeship, work-based learning to scale. To be introduced late 2017. |
| | BUILDS Act (S. 1599)
<i>Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH)</i>
Grants to industry partnerships to expand apprenticeship in infrastructure sectors. |
| | Employer-Provided Worker Training Tax Credit Act
<i>Senator Warner (D-VA)</i>
For qualified training expenditures including apprenticeship. To be introduced late 2017 |
| | White House Executive Order: Expanding Apprenticeship in America
Includes local industry partnerships as a potential recipient of H-1B funds. |
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| 4. An Upskilling Guarantee for America's Frontline Workers | Gateway to Career Fund Act
See description above. |
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| 5. Integrating America's Immigrant Workforce | DREAM Act of 2017 (S. 1615, H.R. 3440)
<i>Sens Graham (R-SC) & Durbin (D-IL), Reps. Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) & Roybal-Allard (D-CA)</i>
New provision to enable those who earn middle-skill credentials to obtain legal status. |
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| 6. Welfare to Careers: A Skills-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction | Work Opportunity Tax Credit, TANF, SNAP E&T
Proposals in development. |
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| 7. Building a Diverse Workforce to Rebuild our Nation's Infrastructure | BUILDS Act (S. 1599)
See above. |
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| 8. Smart Data for a 21st Century Skilled Workforce | College Transparency Act (S. 1121, H.R. 2434)
See description above. |
| | Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking
<i>Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI)</i>
Commission report, which will lead to legislation, supports improved use of wage records and other WDQC recommendations. |