

Skills Equity Policies in the States



A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM NSC'S 50-STATE SCANS

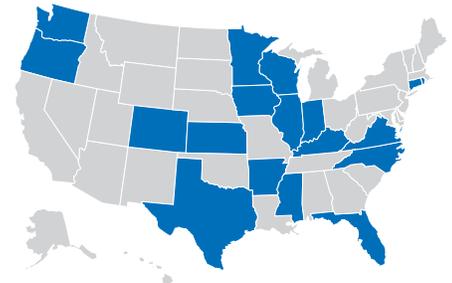
Middle-skill jobs that require education or training beyond high school but not a bachelor's degree make up the largest share of the labor market. Employers looking to fill these middle-skill positions often voice concerns about their ability to find skilled workers. At the same time, limited access to skills training keeps too many people from getting good-paying jobs that can support families. Policymakers can respond to both of these issues by adopting a set of policies that expand equitable access to middle-skill training, credentials, and careers – particularly for those who have faced barriers to economic opportunity.

National Skills Coalition (NSC) is advocating for states to adopt a set of policies that broadly expand access to middle-skill training. These “skills equity” policies are intended to remove barriers that, if addressed, will make it easier for low-income people to access and complete middle-skill training that leads to an in-demand credential and family-supporting job. The policies support integrated education and training, stackable credentials, job-driven financial aid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T), and alignment.

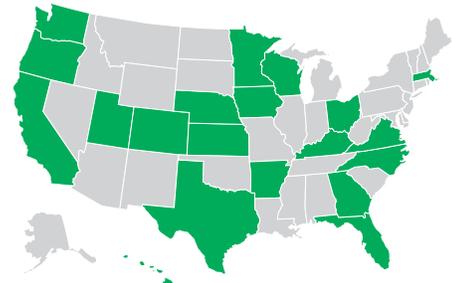
NSC has scanned all fifty states and the District of Columbia to identify which states have skills equity policies in place. The complete scans and related policy toolkits may be found at www.nationalskillscoalition.org/skillsequity. States without policies in place can use NSC's policy toolkits to establish them. States with policies already in place can use the toolkits to further expand their skills equity policies.

The following table summarizes the findings from four skills equity scans. States can use this summary to quickly identify the states that have policies in place. After the table is a brief description of each of the four policies. Overall, the scans find that there are nine states with all four policies in place: Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

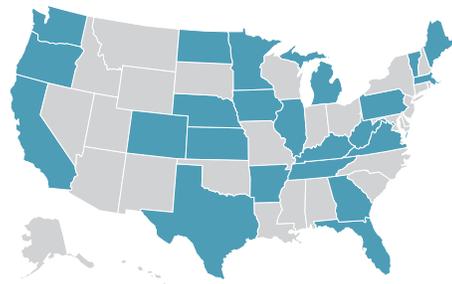
EIGHTEEN STATES have established integrated education and training policies



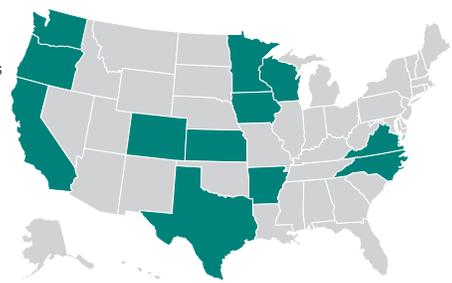
NINETEEN STATES have established stackable credential policies



TWENTY THREE STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA have established job-driven financial aid policies



TWELVE STATES have established alignment policies



50-STATE SCAN OF SKILLS EQUITY POLICIES: SUMMARY FINDINGS

State	Integrated Education and Training	Stackable Credentials	Job-Driven Financial Aid	Alignment
Alabama				
Alaska				
Arizona				
Arkansas	X	X	X	X
California		X	X	X
Colorado	X	X	X	X
Connecticut	X			
Delaware				
DC			X	
Florida	X	X	X	
Georgia		X	X	
Hawaii				
Idaho				
Illinois	X		X	
Indiana	X			
Iowa	X	X	X	X
Kansas	X	X	X	X
Kentucky	X	X	X	
Louisiana				
Maine			X	
Maryland				
Massachusetts		X	X	
Michigan			X	
Minnesota	X	X	X	X
Mississippi	X			
Missouri				
Montana				
Nebraska		X	X	
Nevada				
New Hampshire				
New Jersey				
New Mexico				
New York				
North Carolina	X	X		X
North Dakota			X	
Ohio		X		
Oklahoma				
Oregon	X	X	X	X
Pennsylvania			X	
Rhode Island	X			
South Carolina				
South Dakota				
Tennessee			X	
Texas	X	X	X	X
Utah		X		
Vermont			X	
Virginia	X	X	X	X
Washington	X	X	X	X
West Virginia			X	
Wisconsin	X	X		X
Wyoming				
TOTAL	18	19	24	12

DESCRIPTIONS OF SKILLS EQUITY POLICIES

INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Integrated education and training (IET) policies address the challenge of helping individuals who have basic skill gaps to qualify for middle-skill jobs. These policies encourage the adoption of program models that allow people to develop or refresh basic skills such as math, reading, or spoken English while simultaneously training for an in-demand occupation or industry.

IET programs can provide a crucial on-ramp for individuals with basic skills needs who seek occupational credentials. In the absence of IET programs, such individuals may struggle to make progress in general adult education or English language classes, or become discouraged by the requirement of spending months or years in basic skills education before being able to access occupational training.

States can provide funding to local IET programs or partnerships through grants or formula funds, using state or federal resources. States can authorize the provision of IET via program initiatives that are part of a state adult education and workforce strategy. States can go beyond merely authorizing IET by actively requiring the provision of IET.

NSC's 50-state scan finds that eighteen states have adopted at least one form of integrated education and training policy. All eighteen states have program initiatives and twelve states provide funding. For more information, see [NSC's Integrated Education and Training 50-State Scan](#).

STACKABLE CREDENTIALS

As defined by NSC, A stackable credential is an industry-recognized credential offered by a certificate or other non-degree program, or a third-party certification or occupational license, which articulates toward a higher level certificate or associates degree in the same occupational area. Since the shorter program articulates with the longer program, the education and training for the shorter program does not have to be repeated should the credential recipient continue on in the longer program.

Stackable credentials offer certain benefits, particularly for low skill individuals and working adults. A shorter-term program may be easier to complete for academic or personal reasons.

Stackable credentials can offer recognition for what individuals have attained, provide easier access to postsecondary training, are particularly useful for non-traditional students such as working adults and parents, and by definition offer transitions to more credentials. Consequently, stackable credentials can increase credential attainment, particularly among non-traditional populations.

There are two basic forms of state policies that support stackable credentials. The first is a policy which requires community or technical colleges or other postsecondary training providers to offer stackable credentials. For example, the state may require its postsecondary system to offer short and longer-term certificate programs and require that credits earned in certificate programs be accepted by longer certificate or associate degree programs in the same field. The second form of state policy is for the state to appropriate funds that provide resources to institutions or other non-profit organizations to support stackable credentials.

There are nineteen states with stackable credential policies in place that meet NSC's definition. Seventeen of these states provide funding and ten of these states require postsecondary institutions to offer stackable credentials. For more information, see [NSC's Stackable Credential Policy 50-State Scan](#).

JOB-DRIVEN FINANCIAL AID

Job-driven financial aid policies make it possible for more students to enroll in and complete middle-skill training programs. Many non-traditional students, particularly working learners, cannot afford postsecondary training due to growing higher education costs and the limits of traditional financial aid policies.

While 64 percent of jobs that require postsecondary education or training are middle skill, only 26 percent of Pell dollars—a major source of federal need-based financial aid—go to students in middle-skill training. Under federal law, short-term certificate programs that comprise less than fifteen weeks of instruction or less than 600 clock hours do not qualify for Pell Grants. In fact, only 4 percent of Pell dollars go to students in short-term training programs. Moreover, students who attend school less than half time, often in order to balance education with work and family responsibilities, have limited access to financial aid.



States can help solve these problems by adopting job-driven financial aid policies. Through these policies, states provide grants or tuition waivers to students in middle-skill training, those enrolled in short-term occupational programs, and those enrolled less than half time. By addressing these financial aid gaps, states can provide working learners and others with greater access to credentials that can lead to family supporting careers.

There are twenty-four states with job-driven financial aid policies in place. Eighteen states and D.C. have policies for students enrolled in middle-skill training programs. Seventeen states and D.C. have financial aid available to students enrolled less than half-time. Six states and D.C. have policies for short-term and/or non-credit programs. For more information, see [NSC's Job-Driven Financial Aid Policy 50-State Scan](#).

ALIGNMENT POLICIES

Alignment policies combine the central elements that provide a pathway for low-income, low-skill adults to attain postsecondary credentials and higher levels of employment. By aligning all the elements in a single policy, states can better ensure that individuals receive a comprehensive array of services and that the services complement one another. These elements are: integrated education and training, career counseling, support services, high school equivalent credentials, industry-recognized and stackable postsecondary credentials, and industry engagement. Individuals need not take part in all the pathway elements offered by an alignment policy, only the elements they need.

NSC counted a state as having an alignment policy if it either requires or funds the alignment of the central elements. States can require that higher education and workforce agencies establish frameworks for aligned pathways that institutions and local agencies must provide. States can also support aligned pathways by allocating funding to providers to establish aligned pathways. States can also appropriate funds to agencies to design statewide frameworks and offer technical assistance for aligned pathways.

There are twelve states with alignment policies in place. Two states require alignment and all twelve provide funding. For more information, see [NSC's Alignment Policy 50-State Scan](#).

METHODOLOGY

To conduct the scans, National Skills Coalition reviewed a variety of documents and communicated with state officials. Specifically, NSC reviewed state statutes and key documents for each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia that were available through the websites of the state workforce development board, the workforce administrative agency, and state postsecondary agencies. When the documentation was unclear, state officials were contacted for follow-up information. However, NSC recognizes that no matter the effort, it is possible that there is some information not included in the scans.

National Skills Coalition organizes broad-based coalitions seeking to raise the skills of America's workers across a range of industries. We advocate for public policies that invest in what works, as informed by our members' real-world expertise. We communicate these goals to an American public seeking a vision for a strong U.S. economy that allows everyone to be part of its success.

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Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.