



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION  
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

# SKILLS FOR AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

► A Call for Action, Equity, and Accountability

SEPTEMBER 2020

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our country faces the most devastating economic crisis since the Great Depression, and NSC stands with the working people and local businesses who have been most impacted by the pandemic's economic fallout. Our federal and state governments should provide immediate and sustained relief to those who are out of work, out of business, or just barely hanging on. Income support, healthcare assistance, paid leave, and payroll protection to mitigate small business layoffs will be necessary for some time to come. These immediate responses are essential, but policymakers also need to start investing in our future today, in a way that ensures that every worker and every small business can be part of our nation's economic recovery.

A set of generation-defining investments in inclusive skills policy can contribute to addressing the disproportionate impact of the economic crisis on workers of color, immigrants, and workers with a high school diploma or less; the essential role of small businesses who hire locally and invest in their people but need policymakers to be their partner; and the moral and economic imperative to dismantle structural racism within workforce education and training.

### VISION

An inclusive economic recovery is an expansion of the U.S. economy in which the workers and businesses who were most impacted by this recession, as well as workers who were previously held back by structural barriers of discrimination or lack of opportunity, are empowered to equitably participate in and benefit from the economy's expansion and restructuring. We believe a set of expansive, industry- and worker-targeted skills policies at both the federal and state levels, accompanied by the necessary income and social service supports to keep workers and businesses whole during this transition, must be part of the strategy in pursuit of that goal.





## PRINCIPLES

In developing policy goals toward achieving this vision, we have been driven by a set of principles.

- 1 INVEST IN THOSE FIRST WHO HAVE BEEN HURT THE MOST.**

Workers and businesses who have been most impacted by the economic effects of the pandemic - including workers who've lost their jobs and those who have risked their lives in essential jobs that pay low wages - should be prioritized by skills and re-employment policies intended to support the recovery.
- 2 ELIMINATE STRUCTURAL RACISM IN SKILLS POLICIES.**

Those most impacted by the COVID-19 Recession have been lower-income people of color and immigrants. Structural racism has shaped labor market policies, including skills policies, that contributed to those inequities before and during the pandemic. Skills and re-employment policies should purposefully improve both opportunities and outcomes for workers of color coming out of this recession.
- 3 BETTER JOBS THAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.**

The pandemic has shown that working people are essential to keeping our country running, yet it has also put a spotlight on the fact that not every job values their essential contributions and aspirations. If our federal and state governments are going to make a once-in-generation investment in this recovery, we should not miss the opportunity to ensure those who were struggling before the pandemic have a better job when it ends; a job that allows them to be safe, to support and care for themselves and their families, and to advance in their career.
- 4 SUSTAINABLE CAREERS VS. JUST A JOB.**

Job creation programs or related reemployment policies that focus only on getting the unemployed to their next job may reduce the assistance rolls in the short term. But for workers facing economic challenges before the pandemic, long-term financial sustainability will require long-term, career-focused solutions that continue to invest in workers' skills even after they are back in the labor market. Success should be measured not by the first job, but by the career pathway developed over several years.
- 5 INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH SMALL BUSINESSES AT THE TABLE.**

Just as the impacts of the pandemic have been felt differently between different sectors, and even on different size businesses within each sector, our workforce responses need to be just as industry specific. As we develop forward looking workforce strategies, policies should invest in and empower sector partnerships that are driven by industry stakeholders, including smaller businesses that are often the primary employer in local communities. These partnerships, in addition to addressing local training needs, should also support the diversity and inclusion efforts of local employers.
- 6 MEASURE THE IMPACTS OF OUR INTERVENTIONS AND HOLD OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE.**

An inclusive economic recovery is not just one in which the national unemployment rate goes down or the overall GDP goes up. Across all our skills and re-employment policies, we need to commit to digging into which workers, businesses, and industries have been effectively helped by those policies, and which if any may have (again) been left behind. When we find the latter, we need to commit to adjust those policies to address inequities.



## GOALS

Guided by our vision and principles, National Skills Coalition has developed eight policy goals to build toward an inclusive economic recovery today.



**1**

### **A SAFETY NET THAT SUPPORTS WORKERS' LONG-TERM PATHWAY TO A SKILLED CAREER.**

Remove barriers to our nation's safety net for all workers, including those impacted by the pandemic, and make it a foundation for new career pathways.

**2**

### **A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO RE-TRAINING AND RE-EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL DISPLACED WORKERS.**

Guarantee income, healthcare, training, and re-employment support for any worker who loses a job due to economic disruptions such as pandemics, automation, or trade.

**3**

### **PUBLICLY FUNDED JOB CREATION THAT INCLUDES TRAINING FOR THOSE IN NEED OF A NEW CAREER.**

Ensure job creation efforts, such as those around infrastructure or an expanded public health workforce to fight the pandemic, include investments in skills that expand access to longterm careers for local workers.

**4**

### **SUPPORT TO LOCAL BUSINESSES TO AVERT LAYOFFS AND ENCOURAGE UPSKILLING.**

Subsidize small and mid-sized businesses to avert layoffs, keep their employees paid, and support their re-training during down time.

**5**

### **SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS TO DRIVE INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC TRAINING AND HIRING STRATEGIES.**

Support the partnerships that communities need to develop training strategies targeting the specific needs of individual industries and the local workforce.

**6**

### **DIGITAL ACCESS AND LEARNING FOR ALL WORKING PEOPLE AT HOME AND ON THE JOB.**

Eliminate barriers by making high-quality digital learning available to all workers.

**7**

### **HIGH QUALITY, JOB-READY EDUCATION FOR THOSE WHO NEED TO RE-ENTER THE LABOR MARKET, INCLUDING MAKING COLLEGE WORK FOR WORKING PEOPLE.**

Increase system capacity and expand access to high quality, industry driven education and training that prepares workers for good jobs.

**8**

### **PUBLIC DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY REGARDING WHO IS BEING INCLUDED IN THIS RECOVERY.**

Report data on how different workers and businesses are faring in the recovery and hold policies accountable to equitable outcomes for those most impacted.



## A CALL TO ACTION

This is not just a report. This is a call to action. As we have done for the past twenty years, NSC will bring stakeholders from across our national network to Washington, D.C. to advocate with Congress and the Presidential administration. Through our Skills State Policy and Advocacy Network (SkillSPAN), we will continue to support twenty affiliate coalitions as they fight for policy change at the state level. Through Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships (BLU), we will support thousands of small- and medium-sized businesses in direct advocacy with federal policymakers, and support seven state BLU affiliates to win state policy change. And through Voices for Skills we will engage tens of thousands of grassroots advocates and bring workers into conversations with policymakers.

In response to the recession, America needs a set of generation defining investments in our workforce. We cannot train our way out of a recession, nor can we dismantle economic and racial inequality through skills policy alone. But inclusive investments in the skills of America's workers can contribute to empowering more workers and businesses to drive and thrive in the post-pandemic economy.

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To read the full report and related content, please visit [nationalskillscoalition.org/covid19](https://nationalskillscoalition.org/covid19).