

# POLICY WINS AND STRATEGIC SHIFTS FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE EQUITY POLICY PROJECT

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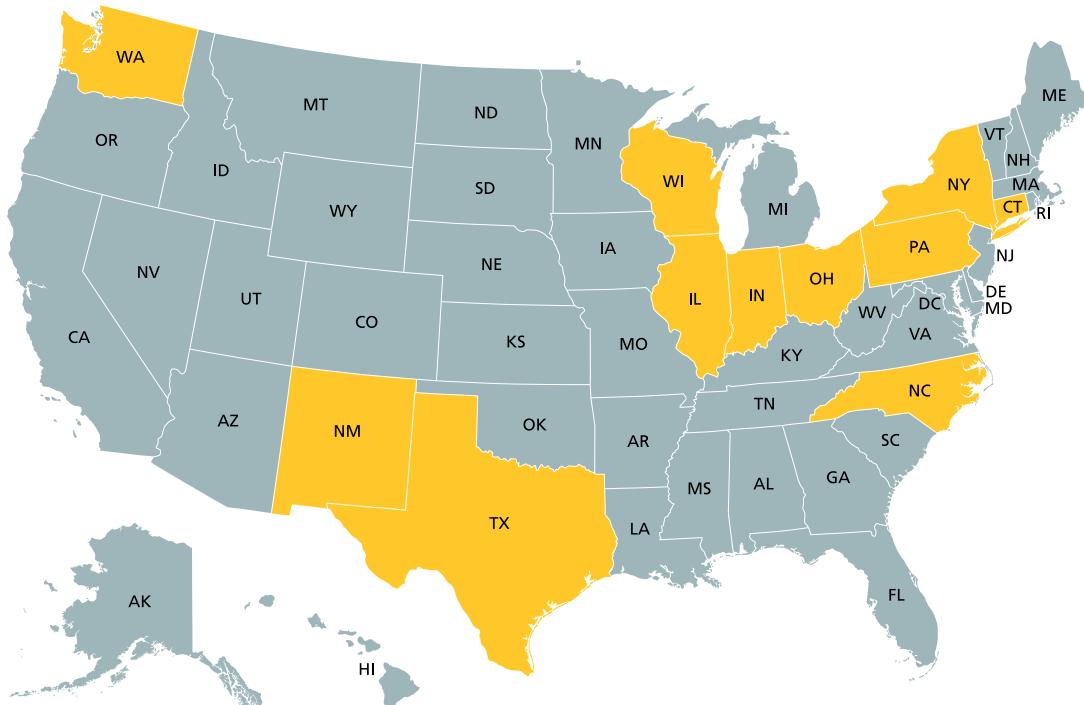
In 2021, Congress passed once-in-a-generation investments in infrastructure and clean energy to rebuild our nation's roads and bridges, expand broadband, and upgrade public transit, utilities, and clean energy systems, among other projects. The success of those infrastructure projects, however, hinges on a wave of hundreds of thousands of workers looking to build careers in these fields and having access to the education, skills training, and economic supports they need to access good jobs and careers in these rapidly growing sectors.

With infrastructure and clean energy investments expected to generate nearly three million jobs per year, the need for collaboration was urgent. It was in

this moment that National Skills Coalition launched the [Infrastructure Equity Policy Project](#) to support state-level policy advocates in advancing policies that intentionally increase quality career opportunities for people historically excluded from infrastructure careers, as well as build coalitions between workforce advocates, racial and gender equity organizations, and environmental, labor, and workers' rights groups.

This intentional focus was necessary because today's workforce is more diverse than ever, and to meet the scale of opportunity ahead, states must ensure that all workers, especially those historically left behind, have access to the training, support, and pathways needed to thrive in these growing sectors.

**INFRASTRUCTURE EQUITY TAKING ROOT IN THE STATES:**  
Eleven states partnered with NSC to advance equitable workforce policies  
through the Infrastructure Equity Policy Project



Since then, a shifting political landscape has introduced fresh uncertainty. Some clean energy and infrastructure projects have already faced funding delays, reductions, or terminations, heightening the urgency for states to safeguard these investments and sustain progress on transformative initiatives. As a result, several states within the Infrastructure Equity Policy Project adapted their strategies and pivoted in response to the shifting political environment.

Despite these challenges, **project partners across eleven states have built diverse coalitions and advanced policy solutions** that link infrastructure and clean energy investments to training pathways, wraparound supports, and good jobs. They have broken down silos between agencies, unlocked funding streams, engaged a wide range of partners, and pushed for more coordinated workforce governance. In doing so, they are creating new models for equitable, future-ready state workforce systems.

This brief highlights the progress achieved by state advocates through the Infrastructure Equity Policy Project, including the strategies they employed, the policy wins they secured, and the foundation they laid for future policy advancement that will broaden the clean energy and infrastructure workforce pipeline. This brief highlights **five key ways** that states are

bringing stakeholders together as well as advancing and defending policies to create stronger, more inclusive infrastructure workforces:

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-  **Strengthening State Governance and Funding for Workforce System Alignment**
-  **Expanding and Strengthening Sector Partnerships**
-  **Integrating Supportive Services (like childcare, transportation, and career navigation that help workers succeed) into Infrastructure Workforce Strategies**
-  **Equipping Workers for the Future of Clean Energy**
-  **Engaging Stakeholders and Building Coalitions**

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These stories offer actionable insights for advocates, policymakers, and stakeholders working to ensure that infrastructure investments live up to their full potential, and that workforce systems are built to be resilient, responsive, equitable, and capable of supporting a rapidly changing economy.



# 1

## STRENGTHENED STATE GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING FOR WORKFORCE SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS:

- ▶ States advanced workforce alignment by creating centralized leadership roles and advocating for agency coordination.
- ▶ Leveraging federal guidance and policy research helped advocates make a strong case for workforce investment.
- ▶ Building broad coalitions across organizations increased support for long-term structural change.

### ILLINOIS

The Infrastructure Equity Policy Project supported the [Chicago Jobs Council's](#) successful advocacy for a Chief Workforce Officer, whose responsibilities include identifying and advocating for additional funding and revenue streams like those available under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). As of this writing, the Chief Workforce Officer position is included in Illinois FY2025 budget, but the role remains unfilled.

CJC's advocacy for a Chief Workforce Officer built on momentum from the 2021 passage of the state's [Climate and Equitable Jobs Act](#) (CEJA), which required more equitable access to clean energy careers. Their proposal also responded to long-standing concerns that Illinois' workforce development system was fragmented and siloed, with limited coordination across state and federal funding streams. These structural problems made it hard for workers to access training and for employers to find talent, especially in infrastructure and clean energy fields.

CJC CEO Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones and Policy Engagement Manager Angela Morrison brought the recommendation for the creation of the Chief Workforce Officer to the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access, which later included the role in its 2023 report. CJC led convenings with CEJA grantees in the Chicagoland area to discuss roles, expectations for collaboration, gaps in the workforce pipeline, and suggestions to DCEO for improved administration as implementation of the state's clean energy workforce investments are realized.

CJC leveraged technical assistance from National Skills Coalition, including a chart outlining programs under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that emphasize or allow workforce spending. This resource and others helped demonstrate the value of a centralized state role in coordinating across agencies and funding streams. CJC also engaged their [Illinois Skills for Good Jobs](#) network of career pathways advocates, service providers, non-profits, community-based organizations, and businesses, to build

### SNAPSHOT STATISTIC: ILLINOIS

**\$0 → \$2.5M+**  
Illinois' FY2025 budget includes funding for a new Chief Workforce Officer to align infrastructure and clean energy training—thanks to sustained advocacy by Chicago Jobs Council.

### SNAPSHOT STATISTIC: NEW MEXICO

**\$32.5**  
MILLION  
SECURED:

New Mexico's 2025 legislative session delivered major workforce wins, including:

**\$17M**  
for clean energy job training

**\$10M**  
for adult education in green industries

**\$2M**  
for economic support pilot

**\$3.5M**  
for adult literacy

broad-based support for the CWO position. Their collective efforts contributed to the CWO position being formally included in the state's budget, cementing a policy win that strategically aligns workforce investments with current and future infrastructure and climate priorities in Illinois.

### NEW MEXICO

**Somos un Pueblo Unido's** efforts included advocating for increased support for workforce training, wraparound support, and stronger coordination among state agencies to align the implementation of federal funding from the IIJA and IRA.

A major milestone of this work was the completion of a co-branded report with NSC, **Building the Future Workforce: A Playbook for Expanding Workforce Opportunities and Reducing Economic Barriers in New Mexico**. The report outlined detailed policy recommendations, and Somos used it to inform state leaders. These efforts helped win several significant funding victories during the 2025 legislative session:

- **\$2 million increase** for the Workforce Training Economic Support Pilot.
- **\$3.5 million** in recurring funding for adult education and literacy programs.
- **\$17 million** over three years from the Community Benefits Fund (**SB48**) to support job training in non-extractive industries.
- **\$10 million** over three years through SB48 for adult education in green energy sectors, including Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs.

### WASHINGTON

The **Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County** (WDC) focused on integrating workforce development into Washington's infrastructure and clean energy strategies through both policy advocacy and coordination with state agencies. These efforts were highlighted in a [blog](#) authored by NSC, which outlined key policy goals for the state, including securing dedicated funding for workforce development within federal infrastructure allocations, sustaining and expanding proven programs like the Economic Security for All (EcSA) initiative, and removing barriers through wrap-around supports such as childcare and transportation.

The blog emphasized that Washington's budget decisions should reflect the realities facing workers and jobseekers, particularly as the state navigates major economic transitions tied to infrastructure and clean energy investments. As a next step, WDC and the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) have requested a meeting with the Governor's office to discuss the recommendations.



# 2

## EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS:

- ▶ Incentivizing regional collaboration through funding encouraged more responsive and coordinated sector partnerships.
- ▶ Sustained engagement with state agencies helped maintain momentum even amid shifting federal priorities.

### PENNSYLVANIA

Partner4Work advanced policy strategies to strengthen and expand industry sector partnerships across Pennsylvania, with a particular focus on infrastructure and clean energy. These partnerships align with the recommendations from NSC's state policy playbook, [Building the Future Workforce](#), which helped shape Partner4Work's advocacy efforts. One such effort successfully pushed the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board to set higher funding levels for local workforce boards that apply collectively as regional industry partnerships. This change is expected to incentivize local boards to collaborate regionally, so employers operating across regions can more easily and effectively engage with the public workforce system.

In addition to this policy win, Partner4Work and its coalition partners advocated for increased state-level funding for industry partnerships. Their efforts helped influence Governor Shapiro's proposed state budget, which included a \$5 million increase—raising funding from \$2.8 million to \$7.8 million—the first significant boost in several years.

### SNAPSHOT STATISTIC: PENNSYLVANIA

Partner4Work advocated for sector partnership funding to increase from

**\$2.8M TO \$7.8M—**

a nearly

**180% INCREASE**

in the Governor's proposed budget.

### CONNECTICUT

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) committed to advancing policies that support industry-sector partnerships across the state and increase access to training and high-quality jobs for women, people of color, and opportunity youth. At the start of the initiative, CWP focused on partnerships in the clean energy sector, given the state's interest in this emerging industry following anticipated federal support. CWP brought together stakeholders to understand the landscape of Connecticut's clean energy industry. They gathered insights on current challenges and opportunities—especially from learners—about what's needed to thrive and where policy could better support success.

It also conducted its own research into the federal funding streams available to Connecticut and the opportunities to leverage these investments towards workforce development and supportive services. CWP then launched an education campaign, meeting with state leaders including at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Governor's Office of Workforce Strategies, to share these insights and advocate

**SNAPSHOT STATISTIC:  
WISCONSIN****49  
PARTNERS  
CONVENED**

to launch a coalition dedicated to building a high-quality infrastructure workforce that earned praise from the governor.

for the state's planning to align with the needs of local employers, training providers, and community members. CWP also engaged the Connecticut Clean Economic Council, a group tasked with advising the state's workforce development plans and deployment of funds in the industry. In early 2025, momentum in the state around clean energy stalled following the pause in federal support. Despite this chill, CWP's efforts continue to shape state decisions as Connecticut now pursues a statewide sector partnership strategy to expand talent pipelines in other industries that continue to grow, including construction. The group is still committed to advancing partnerships that fill the workforce needs of local employers and ensure the economic prosperity of targeted populations and continues to inform the state's policy-making in service of these goals.

**WISCONSIN**

As an established workforce intermediary in Wisconsin, **WRTP|Big Step** understood the varying interests that challenged the creation of a high-quality state infrastructure workforce. Leveraging its reputation as an effective cross-sector collaborator, WRTP|Big Step convened several tables where advocates, practitioners, employers, and other decision makers were present. These partners joined to discuss their differing priorities and made a commitment to creating a shared vision for Wisconsin's workforce in emerging infrastructure sectors. The groups then advocated for state leaders to take actions to meet this vision.

The **Wisconsin Broadband Workforce Coalition** was launched by WRTP|Big Step to bring together industry stakeholders who had previously worked in silos. The coalition helped build strong relationships and collaboratively advance shared/mutual workforce goals. Strategies leveraged by the group include data-driven case-making that demonstrated anticipated labor needs across industries, the impact these jobs would have on residents' economic mobility, and the potential for increased economic competitiveness by the state if such plans were pursued. WRTP|Big Step also leveraged NSC's **research** on the potential employment impacts of federal infrastructure investments, as well as NSC's **public opinion findings** on voters' support for investments in skills training.

The allyship WRTP|Big Step achieved between partners in pursuit of this work, including between labor organizations, community-based organizations, and employer associations, and the position it put the state in to benefit exponentially from federal funds earned recognition by the Governor, Wisconsin Public Service Commission, and then U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. As the current federal administration determines how it will proceed with various funding streams, **Wisconsin is ready to build a highly skilled infrastructure workforce** as opportunities arise thanks to WRTP|Big Step's groundwork and partnerships.



# 3

## INTEGRATING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES INTO INFRASTRUCTURE WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS:

- ▶ Advocates argued that leveraging newly expanded federal funding for childcare and transportation is essential to shaping an infrastructure workforce.
- ▶ Cross-sector dialogue helped align workforce, infrastructure, and broadband leaders around shared priorities.

### INDIANA

The Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute focused on addressing persistent barriers to infrastructure workforce participation-by expanding access to childcare. As part of their advocacy strategy, they initiated conversations with the incoming Governor, his policy team, and department staff about using new federal funding flexibility under **Section 504(e)** of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act to support workforce development through investments in childcare, an idea highlighted in NSC's Building the Future Workforce playbook. They provided agency officials with federal guidance and documentation outlining how childcare services qualify as allowable supportive services tied to infrastructure training and employment.

These efforts have laid the groundwork for future collaboration and introduced new opportunities to align transportation investments with workforce access. Their work positioned childcare as an essential workforce support and contributed to relationship-building with a new administration and recognition of the importance of supportive services to state workforce development efforts.

At the same time, the Institute used this opportunity to deepen relationships with partners at the Indiana Broadband Office (IBO). They invited broadband officials to participate in Skills2Compete Indiana meetings, where they discussed the sector's workforce needs and embedded job quality standards into the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. To support these conversations, the Institute shared relevant resources provided by NSC.



# 4

## EQUIPPING WORKERS FOR THE FUTURE OF CLEAN ENERGY

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS:

- ▶ Advocates positioned the energy transition as a chance to invest in historically excluded workers and build equitable training pathways.
- ▶ States used research and public education campaigns to build support for policy solutions aligned with clean energy workforce needs.

### NORTH CAROLINA

The [North Carolina Budget & Tax Center](#) (NCBTC) focused on preparing the state's workforce for the growing electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing sector. Conversations between NCBTC and the state's Department of Commerce confirmed that legislative action is unlikely in the near term.

NCBTC then pivoted to a research-driven strategy. They began drafting a paper making the case for investment in tools, equipment, and classroom instruction needed to train workers for EV-related roles. The paper will explore opportunities to build on existing apprenticeship models, particularly in manufacturing and electrical trades, by incorporating EV-specific modules or certifications aligned with industry demand and highlight how state policy can support all these goals. It aims to support the efforts of community colleges and workforce development boards as they engage employer stakeholders to secure a commitment to helping develop the courses and investing resources to fund their technology and instructor needs. The paper will spotlight the potential role of community benefits agreements (CBAs), identify examples of

union-industry training partnerships that could help inform the state's approach to EV workforce development, and explore how the state can leverage [Section 504\(e\)](#) federal funds under the newly expanded Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act to support workforce development 504(e) funding options.

### NEW YORK

The [New York Association for Training and Employment Professionals](#) (NYATEP) led efforts to ensure growing enthusiasm for emerging infrastructure projects across the state were rooted in a real understanding of both the need for and the needs of workers. As major employers made significant commitments to expand in the state, NYATEP organized its partners (training providers, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, labor affiliates, and more) to collectively set the vision for an equitable infrastructure workforce in New York.

Key priorities of the group were developed based on NSC's [state policy recommendations](#). These priorities included a focus on connecting local talent to new

**SNAPSHOT STATISTIC:  
NEW YORK****200+  
organizations  
mobilized**

to respond to an abrupt federal funding freeze—mobilizing stakeholders to protect local jobs, preserve training pipelines, and push for continued state investment in an equitable infrastructure workforce.

infrastructure career opportunities, so that residents are leading and benefitting from these investments. The group also prioritized creating high-quality training programs tied to meaningful career pathways. Finally, they emphasized developing local partnerships to address system-level changes needed to unlock opportunity and employment—such as access to childcare and transportation.

NYATEP and its partners advanced these priorities through an education campaign aimed at helping elected officials, employers, and key decisionmakers understand why investing in local talent and training infrastructure is essential—not just to meet employer demand, but to ensure economic prosperity for communities across the state.

In early 2025, changes in federal priorities slowed state progress by abruptly defunding or pausing critical investments, especially those tied to clean energy. In response, NYATEP and the United Way of New York State convened more than two hundred organizations to gather information on this disruption and the impacts on the ground, and to mobilize advocates to push for funds to be released. New York's governor and agency leaders have maintained their interests in continuing the state's effort to remain a leader in clean energy and are exploring options to do so under new threats. In response, NYATEP

is once again organizing its partners to understand how the infrastructure landscape has evolved, the emerging models of success across the state, and the new and existing barriers that must be addressed to achieve the collective vision set out by the group.

**NEW MEXICO**

Somos Un Pueblo Unido led a comprehensive strategy to ensure that New Mexico's shift from fossil fuels to clean energy created real opportunities for people transitioning their careers in the energy sector. In addition to advancing state-level coordination and governance reforms, such as calling for greater investments in staffing and resources for the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Somos and its partners advocated for policies that invest in workers—especially in communities that have been historically dependent on extractive industries.

Now, as New Mexico's economy changes, working people have greater opportunity to prepare for the clean energy jobs of the future. These efforts positioned the state to support a more just transition: one that ensures that the people and communities most affected by the decline of fossil fuels are connected to quality, clean energy careers, with expanded access to adult education, job training, and integrated education and training (IET) programs.



# 5

## ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND BUILDING COALITIONS

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS:

- Advocates engaged cross-sector stakeholders such as environmental groups, utility commissions, and rural foundations to help align diverse interests behind shared workforce goals.

### TEXAS

The **United Ways of Texas** (UWT) leveraged the success of its previous advocacy around digital equity to mobilize partners for the advancement of a high-quality broadband workforce. UWT's earlier efforts led to a \$1.5B investment by the state to expand broadband infrastructure.

In response, UWT advanced an education campaign to inform state agency leaders and lawmakers of the labor needs required to meet this commitment. The campaign also highlighted how state and federal funds could expand opportunities in broadband careers for women, people of color, and rural populations. UWT leveraged NSC's **state policy playbook** and **public opinion findings** to make the case for voter's support of state investments in skills training and recognition that expanding access to high-quality training is key to unlocking Texas' economic potential.

Throughout this work, and with the support of NSC, UWT built strong relationships with critical stakeholders including Texas Rural Funders, Texas Water Foundation, the

Greater Houston Partnership, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Texas Department of Transportation.

In 2025, the group closely followed the response of state leaders to disruptions in infrastructure investments at the federal level and the decisions of lawmakers in the state's 2025 biennial session.

The legislature enacted several laws that reinforced lawmaker and stakeholder interest in expanding and strengthening broadband and water systems. As a result, UWT and its partners plan to convene thought-leaders, state agency leaders, advocates, and practitioners to showcase a strategy for how these commitments can be realized through the development of a more inclusive and resilient workforce.

The group plans to emphasize opportunities to scale local hiring practices, embed supportive services, and ensure quality training programs by highlighting regional and local models that can be replicated by the state.

### SNAPSHOT STATISTIC: TEXAS

**\$1.5  
BILLION  
BROADBAND  
INVESTMENT**

United Ways of Texas mobilized stakeholders and shaped state broadband workforce strategies following this historic infrastructure commitment.

## SNAPSHOT STATISTIC: OHIO

### 504(E) FUNDS TARGETED

Ohio Workforce Coalition engaged state agencies and stakeholders to explore use of newly expanded Section 504(e) funds under the FAST Act—building momentum for workforce investments tied to infrastructure.

#### OHIO

The Ohio Workforce Coalition (OWC) deepened its expertise in how to leverage federal climate and infrastructure investments, and surface transportation funding. The coalition focused on the intersection of climate and infrastructure conversations and emphasized the importance of bringing together advocates and stakeholders with shared interests but different areas of expertise. As part of this strategy, OWC initiated conversations with **Green Energy Ohio**, a trade union integrally involved in infrastructure and solar field installation, construction employers, and other interested parties.

OWC also identified key influencers in state government and began outreach to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) regarding the newly expanded use of Section 504(e) funds for workforce development under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. These efforts were complemented by participation in peer learning sessions hosted by NSC, including a session featuring leaders from states that had successfully advocated for the use of 504(e) funds.



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**National Skills Coalition (NSC)** is a national coalition that works to meet the ever-changing needs of America's workforce. We organize diverse networks that help to change the conversation about work and advocate for workforce-strengthening policies so that more working people have access to a better life, local businesses around the country see sustained growth, and more communities experience prosperity.

Learn more at [nationalskillscoalition.org](http://nationalskillscoalition.org).