



# Workforce Investment Act, Title I

## Workforce Investment Systems for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth

The Government Accountability Office estimates that 90 percent of today's fastest-growing jobs will require some form of postsecondary education. Meeting these increased demands will require a robust public workforce system that can address the needs of a diversity of jobseekers—including individuals with low literacy skills and limited English proficiency, dislocated workers transitioning to new occupations or industries, and young people seeking to enter the labor market—while responding quickly and effectively to the skill requirements of employers.

In 1998, Congress established a framework for the nation's workforce development system under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The law replaced multiple existing training programs with state formula grants, and created a nationwide network of locally administered "one-stop centers" where both workers and employers could access training, employment, and support programs administered through the U.S. Department of Labor and other agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.

Due to be reauthorized nearly a decade ago, WIA has failed to keep pace with changing economic conditions. The law's original emphasis on short-term training and rapid re-employment is increasingly inconsistent with growing demands for longer-term training aligned to high-growth and emerging industries. Administrative barriers make it difficult for local providers to help participants who require multiple services, undermining the law's vision for cross-program alignment. Steady declines in funding—formula funding decreased by nearly 30 percent over the last decade—have made it more difficult to meet the needs of participants. Many state and local systems have adopted innovative strategies despite the limitations of current law, but these efforts could be greatly strengthened if federal policy was updated to reflect best practices in the field.

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### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ Increase the number of individuals receiving training, supporting the creation of career pathways into well-paying jobs for all workers, and increasing attainment of industry-recognized credentials.
- ▶ Invest in sector partnerships that bring together multiple businesses and other stakeholders to implement workforce strategies focused on key local or regional industries.
- ▶ Maintain and improve the public workforce infrastructure; provide dedicated funding to support workforce system infrastructure.

#### National Skills Coalition

seeks an America that grows its economy by investing in its people, so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper.

We organize 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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