

# Meeting Iowa's Workforce Challenge

## Executive Summary

In 2006, Iowa stands at an historic crossroads. As dramatic changes in the state's demography and the global economy intersect, the state faces the danger of worker and skill gaps that could undermine its businesses, erode the earning power of its workers, and slow its economic growth.

By 2012, it's estimated that the state will have in excess of 150,000 more jobs than workers to fill them, the result of Iowa's stagnant population growth converging with impending baby boom retirements. By the same year, almost 45% of all occupations in the state will require post-secondary education or training. These are the job occupations most likely to provide family-sustaining wages.

Yet skilled worker shortages are not simply a future problem. Even now, some of Iowa's most critical industries face difficulties finding qualified workers that impede their competitiveness and productivity.

Trends are not destiny. Iowa has the ability to bridge these skill and worker gaps, but it will take a considerable amount of political will and a sense of urgency, both of which must be generated by the state's political leadership.

In an era of gridlock in Washington DC, Iowa can't wait for the federal government. This paper calls on the new Governor and General Assembly to implement a broad, coherent, and well-integrated workforce investment and systems change strategy that targets high-growth, high-skill industries and provides access to education and training that leads to good jobs for all Iowans. Toward that goal, the state should...

**1. Measure Success, Ensure Accountability**—to make strategic state investments with the best possible information while providing a unifying set of measures that are understandable to all stakeholders in the system and guaranteeing accountability for investments that are made.

**2. Invest in Regional Strategies and Industry-Based, Public-Private Partnerships**—to drive the connectivity of the state's economic and workforce development efforts in the context of regional economies and key industry sectors that are seeking skilled workers.

**3. Build Career Pathways to Good Jobs for All Iowans**—to provide all Iowans with clearly defined and connected pathways to high demand occupations.

**4. Provide Iowans with Lifelong Access to Skills Training and Educational Opportunities**—to ensure that skill development is accessible and affordable for all Iowa residents at whatever stage of their working lives.

Beyond the particulars of these policy recommendations, this paper argues that investments in human capital should represent the centerpiece of Iowa's economic development policy, now and into the future. In a 21st century economy, Iowa's competitive advantage will be found in the skills and work ethic of its people. A series of accountable, investment-oriented state policies—as outlined here—would raise the productivity of Iowa's workers, increase the prospects for prosperity for Iowa's working families, and help improve the competitive edge of Iowa's various regions and industries. The people of Iowa deserve no less.

The Iowa Works Campaign is a non-partisan coalition of diverse organizations seeking consensus solutions to Iowa's economic challenges that benefit workers, businesses and communities alike. The endorsers of this Call to Action are united in the belief that Iowa needs an educated and skilled workforce in order to ensure its economic success and provide a broadly shared prosperity, and support its 4-Point Plan as a means to achieve that goal.

### Endorsing Organizations (Partial List):

AFSCME Iowa Council 61	Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce	SEIU/Iowa for Health Care Technology Association of Iowa
Association of Iowa Workforce Partners	Iowa Community Action Association	United Way of Central Iowa
Child and Family Policy Center	Iowa Health Care Association	
Greater Des Moines Partnership	Iowa United Auto Workers	
Iowa Association of Community College Trustees		

For a complete list of endorsing organizations, and more information about the Iowa Works Campaign, follow the links at [www.workforcealliance.org](http://www.workforcealliance.org)