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New Mexico Voices for Children

Santa Fe Community College

SER - Jobs for Progress

The State of New Mexico Higher Education Department

The State of New Mexico Lieutenant Governor's Office

The State of New Mexico Office of Education Accountability

The State of New Mexico Public Education Department

To learn more about the Skills2Compete-New Mexico campaign, contact:

Center for Philanthropic Partnerships at 505.883.3660

Or visit:

**[www.nationalskillscoalition.org/
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Skills2Compete-New Mexico PLATFORM OF PRIORITIES

November 2010

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Vision

A skilled workforce is crucial to New Mexico's productivity and competitiveness. Every New Mexico resident should have access to at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification or associate's degree—to ensure they have the necessary skills to succeed in the 21st-century economy. Residents should also have access to the basic skills and financial aid needed to pursue such education.

Background

New Mexico is in many ways positioned to thrive in the 21st-century economy. However, there are gaps in the skills of our workforce and in the state's training and education policies that threaten to undermine our strengths. For example, while high school and college educational attainment is growing, it is still below national averages.

Middle-skill jobs represent the largest share of jobs in New Mexico—some 48 percent—and the largest projected share of future job openings. Middle-skill jobs are those that require more than a high school diploma but not a four-year degree. Prior to the recession, New Mexico was already experiencing shortages of middle-skill workers in crucial industries. With unemployment rising in the state, this is precisely the time to ensure we are training the middle-skill workforce that will be critical to our economic recovery and long-term success.

Addressing the need for middle-skill workers will require attention not only to educational opportunities for young people, but also for those already in the workforce. Sixty-three percent of the people who will be in New Mexico's workforce in the year 2020 are already in the workforce today.

New Mexico needs a bold and broad plan to address the educational and economic challenges facing our state during these tough economic times and beyond. Those challenges demand a truly transformative vision that allows every worker to be a part of economic recovery: guaranteed access to two years of postsecondary education or training. Every New Mexican must have the opportunity to earn the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school that leads to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college. It must be available at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. We must further ensure that every New Mexican has access to the basic skills needed to pursue such education.

How do we ensure New Mexico's workforce has the Skills to Compete?

Three key principles—Partnerships, Pathways, and Proportionate Investment—underpin our strategy for helping more New Mexico residents attain the middle-skill credentials they need to help the state maintain its competitive edge and to help families attain economic independence.

Partnerships

New Mexico needs to invest in and support regional partnerships among key stakeholders including businesses, postsecondary institutions, trade associations, labor, and community-based organizations that meet business needs for a skilled workforce and worker needs for good jobs.

Policy Recommendations

- Support partnerships that most effectively create opportunities for people at multiple skill and educational levels to attain middle-skill training and credentials.
- Support programs that target basic and middle-skill training needs of employers.
- Link workforce funds more closely with the New Mexico's economic development initiatives and leverage additional funds for partnerships.

Pathways

New Mexico needs to create better, more accessible pathways, particularly for working adults, to middle-skill credentials with meaning in the labor market.

Policy Recommendations

- Raise the bar for the New Mexico's adult basic education (ABE) system by stressing readiness for postsecondary education training rather than high school/GED completion. Better align ABE programs with postsecondary institutions.
- Focus on critical industries and occupations and align courses of study within and between postsecondary institutions to create clearer training and education pathways.
- Help more adults obtain postsecondary credentials by encouraging adoption of best practices for instruction and curriculum, broadening financial aid to part-time students, and providing targeted student support.

Proportionate Investment

New Mexico needs to match our skills investments to the demands of today's labor market. Although 45 percent of our jobs are middle-skill jobs, we are not spending nearly that proportion of our state's education and training dollars to prepare people for these jobs. We need to measure how well current systems are meeting labor market needs and then increase investments in the systems and programs that are effective in helping workers gain middle-skill credentials and jobs.

Policy Recommendations

- Set statewide performance goals, as recommended by the National Governors Association, and develop an integrated performance management system for postsecondary and workforce training systems. Goals should focus on skill attainment, program completion, credential/certificate attainment, employment and wage increases, and progress toward filling middle-skill jobs in New Mexico.
- Increase funding for postsecondary education and training, both within and outside the public higher education system, and provide incentives for those programs and institutions most effective at helping adults attain middle-skill credentials.
- Increase funding for adult basic education, providing incentives and support for those programs most effective at helping adults transition effectively to postsecondary training programs.

How can the private sector and the philanthropic community help?

There are many ways to move some of these priorities forward through partnering with businesses and private funders.

- Educate and recruit funders to prioritize long-term funding for sector partnerships, alignment and coordination of programs, agencies and services, as well as for wrap-around supportive services.
- Support policies that increase the alignment of economic development priorities with the public workforce development system, and provide capacity building assistance to economic development and workforce development professionals to help them understand how best to work together regionally.
- Provide capacity building assistance to workforce development organizations and others on developing successful sector partnerships and on helping to create systems alignment and coordination.
- Outreach to businesses to increase employer involvement, engagement, and investment in sector partnerships and career pathways.
- Convene community colleges and other postsecondary education providers to discuss and facilitate alignment and collaboration within the workforce training system.
- Develop return on investment measures to make a case for workforce investments within the business community.
- Develop a joint measure or/report card for all corporate and foundation investments in workforce development to track funding for and results from workforce investments, with progress toward filling middle-skill jobs as a key measure.