



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 27, 2010**

**CONTACT:** Ambar Mentor, Valerie Denney Communications  
(312) 408-2580 ext. 25- office; (773) 343-1481- cell  
[amentor@valeriedenney.com](mailto:amentor@valeriedenney.com)

## **NEW REPORT: LARGEST PORTION OF JOB OPENINGS PROJECTED FOR NEW MEXICO BY 2016 ARE “MIDDLE SKILL”**

***New Mexico’s Economic Recovery Tied to Preparing Workers for Jobs Requiring More  
than High School Diploma, Less Than a Four-Year Degree; New Mexico Must Invest  
in Training Time Now To Meet Future Demand***

*Federal Recovery Dollars to Create Jobs in Middle-Skill Industries; Report Urges Greater  
Opportunities for Training Beyond High School*

ALBUQUERQUE — In what will play a major role in New Mexico’s economic recovery, more than 328,000 “middle-skill” job openings—those that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree—are projected for the state by 2016, concludes a new study released today by National Skills Coalition (formerly The Workforce Alliance). But to unleash the full economic benefits of these openings, New Mexico will need to continue to invest in proper training and education for its workforce.

Though the recession has halted current employment growth, the report projects that middle-skill jobs (including new jobs and replacement) would account for 40 percent of all openings between 2006 and 2016.

Despite New Mexico’s strong investments in post-secondary education and workforce training, preparation for middle-skill jobs has not kept up with demand. Prior to the national recession, New Mexico was already experiencing shortages of middle-skill workers in crucial industries. About 49 percent of all jobs are classified as middle skill but only 45 percent of New Mexico workers likely have the credentials to fill them. As New Mexico, along the rest of the country, moves from recession into recovery, employers will likely once again face the challenge of finding quality middle- and high-skill workers – slowing the pace of economic growth.

The report, which for the first time tracks New Mexico’s jobs at the middle-skill level, notes that as the economy picks up and Recovery Act dollars continue to flow into New Mexico, the state will see growth in these kinds of jobs.

“This is really an important time for New Mexico to invest in training,” urges Zach Silk of National Skills Coalition, the convening organization for the national Skills2Compete campaign. “If New Mexico seeks timely economic recovery and long-term prosperity, the state must ensure that its workforce has the necessary education and training to meet the labor demands of the future. The national recession provides a time frame for businesses and the state to be strategic, evaluate labor and skill needs, and train and prepare for the jobs that are expected to grow.”

*New Mexico’s Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs* also assesses the current and future middle-skill employment and education patterns in the state:

- **Demand in mining to grow.** Job growth is expected to surge by more than 12 percent between 2007 and 2017 for an additional 2,400 jobs in New Mexico, primarily in support activities for the mining sector. Many of these will be middle-skill jobs.

- more -

- Middle-skill jobs expected to grow by 2016 in New Mexico include **licensed practical nurses with a median annual earning of \$45,830; police officers with a median annual earning of \$39,660; and carpenters with a median annual earning of \$31,310.** The report includes a list of 30 high-demand middle-skill jobs in New Mexico.
- **New Mexico faces challenges when it comes to basic skill attainment.** Some 20 percent of adult New Mexicans are illiterate, and 46 percent are functionally illiterate. A little more than 12 percent of New Mexico adults with less than a high school diploma are enrolled in basic education, and less than 12 percent of residents of limited English proficiency are enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

The report also finds that 63 percent of the people who will be in New Mexico's workforce in the year 2020 were already working adults in 2005—long past the traditional high school to college pipeline. National Skills Coalition says this finding underscores the need for New Mexico to continue to target training and education to people who are working or who could be working today.

“Many industries in the area have experienced shortages of skilled workers for years. We know that when the economy bounces back we will need not just workers, but workers with particular skills and certifications to sustain growth and keep us moving forward,” said Bruce McClure, Community Involvement Manager at Sandia National Laboratories and board member of the New Mexico Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence.

The analysis for the study was performed by National Skills Coalition using data from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, American Community Survey and state labor market data from the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. The analysis is based on the methodology developed for the national Skills2Compete report – *America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs* – by labor economists Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman.

Echoing a vision put forward by the national Skills2Compete campaign, President Obama first challenged every American to commit to at least one year of postsecondary education or training in February 2009, and has continued to signal that investing in a range of skills for America's workforce—“be it at a technical college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship”—will be a priority for his Administration.

The Skills2Compete-New Mexico campaign is calling on state leaders to embrace a strong vision to guide an economic and education strategy that would allow residents to meet or exceed the President's challenge: Every New Mexican should have access to at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have the basic skills needed to pursue such education.

“This study is a strong indicator of the priorities New Mexico needs to have if we are to build a competitive workforce in the 21st Century,” Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish said. “I am committed to creating an education system that is nimble and able to train the workforce for the jobs that will kick start the economic recovery. That means a strong network of community colleges and vocational institutions with solid programs focused on our workforce needs.”

“An education and training strategy guided by the Skills2Compete vision would give New Mexico a competitive edge for recovery and long-term growth,” says Robin Brulé, Director of the Office of Philanthropic Outreach. “As New Mexico looks to remain a strong competitor in the global economy, it's critical that we prepare workers for the jobs of the future. We look forward to developing and implementing this economic and education strategy that would allow New Mexicans to obtain higher skills and higher wages in middle- and high-skill jobs and careers, encouraging family economic success.”

### Skills2Compete-New Mexico – Middle-Skill Jobs Report – Page 3

The report was funded in part by the Ford Foundation. The state and national efforts of the Skills2Compete campaign are made possible, in part, by general support from National Skills Coalition's national funders including the Joyce Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and Annie E. Casey Foundation. W.K. Kellogg Foundation has also provided support for related National Skills Coalition activities in New Mexico.

###

Skills2Compete is a non-partisan campaign to ensure the U.S. workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity. The campaign's diverse and growing list of endorsers include national and local leaders from business, labor, education and training, community and civil rights groups, and the public sector. The Skills2Compete Vision: Every U.S. worker should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have the opportunity to obtain the basic skills needed to pursue such education. For more information and to download to full report, *New Mexico's Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs*, visit [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/Skills2Compete](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/Skills2Compete) and [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/New Mexico](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/New Mexico).

National Skills Coalition organizes 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. And 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. For more information, visit [www.nationalskillscoalition.org](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org).