

Business Leaders United *for Workforce Partnerships*

Business Leaders Challenging Policymakers on the Skills Gap

Our nation's policymakers have lost their way when it comes to investing, aggressively and effectively, in the skills of America's workforce. U.S. industries face structural skills gaps that make it hard for employers to find properly skilled workers to fill open positions. Individual firms and industry clusters have developed "workforce partnerships" with a variety of partners—community-based organizations, community colleges, labor-management training funds, workforce investment boards—to train local residents to fill those jobs. But the U.S. government needs to hold up its end of the bargain. Our education and training policies should be prioritizing the expansion and replication of these employer- and industry-based partnerships. If business leaders from a variety of industries and firms—including small-, medium-sized and corporate employers—come together and speak with one voice on these issues, we might be able to bring a dose of reality back to the skills debate in Washington.

What's the Strategy?

Business Leaders United (BLU) for Workforce Partnerships is a coordinated effort across several national organizations that work with employers to build and promote these workforce partnerships. BLU wants to create a common platform from which these diverse business leaders can jointly communicate to national policymakers, the press and the American public about the skills gaps facing the U.S. economy, and about the effective industry-based strategies they've developed which could serve as models for national policy.

2012 will be a pivotal year not only for our economic recovery, but for the future direction of our nation's economic and education policies—particularly with the start of a new Presidential term and a new Congress in 2013. Over the next year, BLU employers will collaborate to ensure that workforce skills, and the expanded role of workforce partnerships, are among the key priorities that national policymakers intend to address when they take office in early 2013.

How Can I Participate?

As a business leader, it costs you nothing to participate in BLU other than the sharing of your time, expertise and commitment to the skills agenda. You can participate by:

- **Developing our Agenda:** BLU leaders can participate in discussions with other employers to develop a skills policy agenda that will support their efforts to train and hire workers.
- **Meeting with Policymakers in Washington:** Small groups of BLU leaders will be periodically flown in, at no expense, to meet with congressional leaders and the Administration. BLU will also facilitate calls with individual Members of Congress.

- **Hosting a Meeting at your Company:** BLU will work with employers who want to host a meeting with a Member of Congress or an administration official, to highlight your business, your employees, and the partner organizations who comprise your workforce strategy.
- **Talking to the Press:** When receiving inquiries from the national or regional press, BLU can refer reporters to you as a public spokesperson about your industry's skill needs.
- **Writing Opinion Pieces:** BLU can provide assistance to employers who want to submit op-eds to newspapers or trade publications on skills policy issues.
- **Appearing in Ads, Publications:** BLU would like to feature employers like yourself as some of the public faces of our nation's skills challenges, and of the industry-led workforce partnerships that should be part of the solution.

What Do I Gain from Participating in BLU?

- **Information:** BLU partners will organize periodic employer-focused conference calls about the latest skills policy debates in Washington, DC. BLU will also prepare to-the-point materials on policy issues that can be shared with your industry colleagues.
- **Recognition:** All participating BLU employers will be profiled, and collected BLU profiles will be shared nationally with industry groups, policymakers and the press.
- **Peers:** BLU leaders will get a chance to know other employers like themselves who are both leading local training efforts, as well as trying to change the public debate on skills issue.
- **A Chance to Make a Difference:** We believe the collective power of employers coming together from across the country to talk about skills will raise the profile of this issue in Washington, DC. Your participation will have impact.

How can I Find Out More?

Contact one of BLU's sponsoring organizations:

National Skills Coalition: Andy Van Kleunen (andyvk@nationalskillscoalition.org, 202-223-8991)

National Fund for Workforce Solutions: Fred Dedrick (fdedrick@jff.org, 617-728-4446)

Skills for America's Future, The Aspen Institute: Karen Elzey (karen.elzey@aspennst.org, 202-736-1079)

Corporate Voices for Working Families: Stephen Wing (smwing@corporatevoices.org, 202-467-8144)

Check out who is already participating in BLU at www.nationalskillscoalition.org/BLU .