



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

2014 Toolkit for Engaging Gubernatorial Candidates

State Advocates Meeting

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1730 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Suite 712
Washington DC 20036
202.223.8991

info@nationalskillscoalition.org
www.nationalskillscoalition.org

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Engaging Gubernatorial Campaigns: Overview of the Toolkit

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Election season brings attention to important issues. Candidates are talking about what they will do if elected and how they talk about these issues can have an impact once they're in office. Candidates have competing demands and many constituencies will be trying to bring their issues to the forefront of the campaign. Without you, employment and job training issues could get lost. You can make sure that workforce development is a part of the public dialogue and at the top of candidates' agendas. This toolkit provides information on how you can do that.

First, make sure you are well-informed on what election-related activities federal law allows 501(c)(3) organizations to engage in. Remember, all 501(c)(3) organizations must provide the same access to all announced candidates. Refer to Bolder Advocacy's Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, a supplement of this toolkit.

Next, map out your activities during the 2014 cycle. NSC has provided a sample timeline to help you think through how to plan out your calendar. Some things to consider when you start:

- Will this work be an organizational or coalition effort? Several voices together can help make the issue more visible. If you decide to work as a coalition, make sure all roles within the coalition are defined and that key responsibilities are assigned, including the coalition's spokesperson, media tracker, social media coordinator and communications lead.

In general, you'll want to begin building your relationships with the campaigns early to make sure your message is built into their campaign platform. Start by:

- Sending the campaign your coalition's platform. This should include a fact sheet about the problem, the role of workforce development and policy solutions to help more people get the skills needed for the good-paying jobs employers need to fill. You should also include talking points and polling information, if available, the campaigns can use when talking about workforce development.
- Scheduling a meeting with the policy staff to sell why workforce development must be a central focus of their campaign.
- Subscribe to each candidate's email lists to stay on top of upcoming events and forums with the candidates for opportunities to ask questions related to workforce development.



It's important to find opportunities to keep workforce development issues as part of the public dialogue. Here are a few suggestions:

- Meet with the editorial boards of newspapers in your state. Having a favorable editorial appear can help elevate the discussion of workforce development throughout the election.
- Hold a site visit with the candidates. This is both an opportunity to educate candidates about the great work your organization does and an opportunity – if media is invited – to show successful workforce programs to reporters and get coverage of the candidate's visit to your program.
- Attend candidate events and forums and ask questions of the candidates on workforce development issues.
- Submit an op-ed to a regional or state-wide newspaper to have your organization or coalition's viewpoint heard. Make sure you send a copy of the op-ed to the candidates.
- Run a letter-to-the-editor campaign. Ask your supporters and coalition members to submit a letter to the editor on workforce development issues. Don't forget, when an article or opinion piece appears on workforce development in a newspaper, it's a great time to send in a response.
- Reach out to talk radio stations. Ask to come on a show where you can talk about the state's workforce development system and what you would like to see the gubernatorial candidates commit to doing to improve it. You can also call-in to make a comment or ask a question when candidates are being interviewed.
- There are several state-based blogs that focus on issues affecting the state. Reach out to the blog owner/moderators to find out if you can post about what you want to see gubernatorial candidates commit to doing to improve the state's workforce development system once they are elected.
- Engage with candidates, the media, and your followers through Facebook and Twitter!

Contact NSC staff at any time if you have questions and need more information at info@nationalskillscoalition.org.

Important Information for 501(c)(3) Organizations Engaging in Election-Related Activities

February 2014

If your organization is a 501(c)(3) organization, there are certain restrictions on the types of activities that you can undertake as election year advocacy.

National Skills Coalition is unable to provide legal advice as you are planning these activities.

To help you with making decisions on what your organization is and is not allowed to do according to federal tax law, NSC has provided some references for you to review to answer your questions. On the next page, the “Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities” fact sheet – provided by Bolder Advocacy, an initiative of the Alliance for Justice – outlines what is and is not permissible election activities for 501(c)(3) public charities.

Bolder Advocacy also provides a more in-depth report, *Rules of the Game: A Guide to Election-Related Activities for 501(c)3 Organizations*, at <http://bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Rules-of-the-Game.pdf>.

Bolder Advocacy also has resources on election activities for other types of organizations including 501(c)(4) organizations and foundations. Visit www.bolderadvocacy.org for more information.

If you have further questions, Bolder Advocacy has an “Ask an Expert” online tool available for any advocacy-related questions. While this not legal advice, their advocacy coaches will work with you to answer your questions. The form can be found at http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/6539/p/salsa/web/common/public/signup?signup_page_KEY=8211.

You can also call for technical assistance during standard business hours, EST: 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229).



Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities

Ensuring Election Year Advocacy Efforts Remain Nonpartisan

Federal tax law explicitly prohibits activity by 501(c)(3) organizations that supports or opposes candidates for public office, but it also recognizes the importance of their participation in the democratic process. The law allows charities to engage in a wide variety of nonpartisan election-related activities, including voter registration and education as well as ballot measure campaigns.

The IRS prohibits what it calls “campaign intervention” by 501(c)(3) organizations. A 501(c)(3) organization may not help or hurt the chances for election of any particular candidate or group of candidates, regardless of political party affiliation. For instance, a 501(c)(3) could not campaign to get specific women or Latinos elected, even if they do not care whether the candidates are Republican, Democrat, or even if the election is non-partisan (no party affiliation).

A 501(c)(3)’s role during an election must be educational – and to encourage civic participation. Although there is a lot a 501(c)(3) can do around an election, the organization needs to stop short of directly or indirectly telling people how to vote or for whom to vote.

Permissible Election Activities by 501(c)(3) Public Charities

With certain restrictions, a 501(c)(3) MAY do the following:

- engage in limited lobbying, including work on [ballot measures](#)
- continue to advocate for the organization’s issues during an election year
- educate all of the candidates on public interest issues within the purview of the organization
- [criticize sitting elected officials](#), especially if the organization has a history of doing so
- publish [legislative scorecards](#)
- conduct nonpartisan public education and training sessions about participation in the political process
- prepare candidate [questionnaires and create voter guides](#)
- rent, at fair market value, mailing lists and facilities to other organizations, legislators, and candidates if an on-going activity and not arranged only for a particular candidate or party
- conduct nonpartisan get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives¹
- canvass the public on issues
- sponsor [candidate debates](#)
- work with all political parties to get its positions included on the party’s platform
- distribute communications in close proximity to the election that do not expressly advocate for the election or defeat of the candidate, but refer to a candidate (often described as “electioneering communications”)²

¹ This fact sheet addresses the rules for 501(c)(3) public charities. There are additional rules regulating voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities of [private foundations](#).

- Conduct [voter protection activities](#)
- establish an [affiliated 501\(c\)\(4\) organization](#), which can engage in partisan electoral activity as a secondary activity

The IRS considers [ballot measure advocacy to be lobbying](#), not election activity. A 501(c)(3) public charity can support or oppose ballot measures (and should count the cost against its lobbying limits), but should avoid tying its ballot measure messages to candidates or political parties.

What 501(c)(3)s Cannot Do

While there are a number of activities 501(c)(3) public charities can do, there are a few activities they cannot do. 501(c)(3)s are prohibited from:

- endorsing candidates for public office
- making any campaign contributions (whether monetary or in-kind)
- making expenditures on behalf of candidates
- restricting rental of their mailing lists and facilities to certain candidates or engaging in such business transactions for the first time with candidates
- asking candidates to sign pledges on any issue (for instance, ask candidates if they promise to support the DREAM Act if elected)
- increasing the volume or amount of criticism of sitting officials who are also candidates, as election time approaches
- publishing or communicating anything that explicitly or implicitly favors or opposes a candidate
- highlighting the differences between candidates for public office on a high-profile issue on which the candidates in an election have diverging views
- making a positive or critical reference to someone in his or her status as a candidate
- engaging in issue advocacy when your organization cannot articulate a clear non-electoral purpose for the activity or communication
- criticizing sitting legislators or other elected officials by attacking their personal characteristics or attacking them in their status as a candidate, rather than focusing on the substance of a policy issue

The information contained in this fact sheet and any attachments is being provided for informational purposes only and not as part of an attorney-client relationship. The information is not a substitute for expert legal, tax, or other professional advice tailored to your specific circumstances, and may not be relied upon for the purposes of avoiding any penalties that may be imposed under the Internal Revenue Code. Alliance for Justice publishes plain-language guides on nonprofit advocacy topics, offers educational workshops on the laws governing the advocacy of nonprofits, and provides technical assistance for nonprofits engaging in advocacy. For additional information, please feel free to contact Alliance for Justice at 866-NPLOBBY.

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² Federal and state election laws often require disclosure of electioneering communications (including at times the donors who helped pay for the communication) and may require the inclusion of disclaimers identifying who paid for the communication.

Sample Election Year Timeline

Below is a sample timeline of how to plan out several of the activities mentioned in this toolkit. Use this as a guide as you are beginning to plan out your election year activities.

<p>February thru March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hold meetings within your organization or among your coalition to begin planning activities to promote workforce development issues during the gubernatorial campaign. Develop your policy platform. Designate roles including a spokesperson, social media guru, researcher and media tracker.
<p>April (or once primaries are over)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Send an invitation to each gubernatorial campaign for a site visit. ➤ Ask all gubernatorial campaigns policy staff to meet with your coalition to meet to discuss workforce development. ➤ Subscribe to each gubernatorial campaign's email lists. Check for upcoming campaign events. ➤ Designate someone to check talk radio stations for opportunities to talk about workforce development and times when candidates will be on air. Schedule time for coalition head or executive director to talk about workforce development issues on talk radio programs.
<p>May-June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hold a site visit with each candidate.
<p>July-October</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hold a Letter to the Editor (LTE) campaign, submitting LTE's to each of the state's newspapers through October. ➤ Submit and place an op-ed in the state's largest newspaper.
<p>November 4, 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ELECTION DAY!
<p>November 5, 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Send transition materials to the governor-elect.



Meeting with Candidate Staff

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Meeting with candidates' policy staff is an excellent way to make sure workforce development issues are a part of the discussion. Chances are the policy staff are not well-versed workforce development issues, so this meeting can open the door to elevating employment and job training issues during the course of the election season.

Remember: All 501(c)(3) organizations must provide the same access to all announced candidates. Make sure you are asking each campaign for a meeting and providing them the exact same information or you risk your organization's tax status. Refer to Bolder Advocacy's Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities.

Below are a few tips to help make sure your meeting is successful.

Before the Meeting

Contact the campaigns of all candidates. Call the campaign office and ask to speak with the campaign's policy director. Tell them your coalition would like to meet with him or her and any other policy staff.

Prepare for the meeting. These are campaign people you are meeting with. Their goal is to get their candidate elected. They need to hear why putting workforce development front and center in their campaign is a good tactical move. Your job is to convince them. You will want to address three main areas:

- The problem. Tell them why they should care about workforce development. Include any statistics that reinforce the problem. Develop a one-page fact sheet stating the problem and your key messages.
- Include the role of workforce development in solving the problem.
- Provide policy solutions. You do not need to get too technical. If you have polling data supporting these solutions, include it. Include talking points on how the candidate should talk about these policy solutions.

Research the candidates. Check the candidate's past statements, current positions on the issue, and past votes if they've held office so that you go into the meeting informed.

Decide who will attend the meeting. Bringing more than four or five people can be hard to manage. Keep it small, but bring people who represent different perspectives that have an interest in the issue.

Plan your meeting. Be sure to identify who will speak on each issue, and who will take notes.



During the Meeting

Be prompt and patient. Campaigns are chaotic. Be patient.

Stick to your agenda. Your agenda should cover three main areas: the problem, the role of the workforce development system, and the policy platform of your coalition. Designate someone to talk about each area. Start with the problem statement and key messages. Acknowledge the candidate's position on workforce development and any previous work by the candidate on the issues if relevant.

After the Meeting

Each person who took part in the meeting should promptly send a personal thank you letter to the policy staff they met with. Your next step as a coalition will be putting together transition information for whichever candidate wins the election.

Hosting Site Visits with Candidates

Tips for arranging and hosting site visits with candidates

February 2014

Having a candidate visit your facilities and seeing your programs in action is an excellent way to educate the candidate and their staff and show them the importance of workforce development. It also provides an opportunity to gain media attention to the work your organization does and can reinforce your messaging. Below are a few tips to help you organize a site visit with a candidate.

Remember: All 501(c)(3) organizations must provide the same access to all announced candidates. Make sure you are asking each campaign for a site visit and providing them the exact same information or you risk your organization's tax status. Refer to Bolder Advocacy's Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities.

Get a Head Start

- The first step is to make contact with each candidate's campaign office. Request to speak with the scheduler. If you plan on meeting with each campaign's policy staff, at that meeting you can ask to have the candidate visit your facilities.
- Start early and have a few dates and times in mind. Candidate's schedules are filled with events. The closer to Election Day, the less likely they will be able to do a site visit.

Leverage Traditional and Social Media to Maximize Your Impact

- If a candidate is making a visit to your program, send out a media advisory beforehand. Then make follow-up calls and/or send emails to local reporters and invite them to cover the visit.
- Consider asking the candidates' communications staff for their help in coordinating your press outreach activities with their own efforts.
- Use social media outlets (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, blogs) to announce and publicize the visit.

Make Time to Prepare

- Your agenda should cover three main areas: the problem, the role of the workforce development system, and the policy platform of your coalition.
- Make sure key stakeholders are prepared. Don't assume that everyone has experience or a comfort level in public speaking.



- Prepare employers to discuss their need for skilled workers and how they are working with community partners to address this need.
- Encourage program participants to share how local programs have given them a leg up in the labor market.
- Assemble a packet or folder of key statistics, program information and policy platform.

Use Your Time with the Candidate Wisely

- If a candidate is visiting your site, make sure your programs are in progress so they can see how the programs work and why resources are so critical.
- Talk about the issues (i.e. the problem, role of workforce development system, and policy platform) in terms that will resonate with the candidate. Link your points to a candidate's priorities.
 - Is the candidate interested in global competitiveness? Economic development? Veteran transition? Show how your program and local efforts address these issues.
- Don't be afraid to address tough questions. Be prepared to respond to comments such as:
 - Everyone has to share in the pain.
 - **Your response:** Yes, but workforce has taken more than its fair share of cuts. In times of unprecedented long-term unemployment, now is not the time to cut programs that actually support economic recovery and employment. Discuss how funding cuts impacted your ability to serve local employers and workers.
 - There is no research that shows that workforce programs work.
 - **Your response:** Investments in the workforce system show significant returns on investment, helping individuals get jobs, improve their earnings, and contribute to their local economies in countless ways. Research demonstrates that individuals who receive services through the workforce system show positive outcomes for both employment and earnings gains.
 - There are too many workforce programs.
 - **Your response:** With mounting skill demands and the pending retirement of millions of skilled baby boomers, we need to ensure that every U.S. worker can qualify for skilled employment in U.S. industries. This means we need a diversity of programs and pathways to ensure a wide range of people can address this challenge: young people struggling to find jobs out of high school; mid-career dislocated workers who have been employed for 20 years but who now must re-train for a new occupation



or even to remain in their own industry; and older workers who are postponing retirement and need some skills and support to continue earning a living.

- Have a Plan B if the candidate is late or cancels, especially if it's a visit to your program. Candidates sometimes have to change plans at the last minute, so be sure that you have a backup plan if you have invited media.

Following the Site Visit

- Send a thank you note immediately to both the candidate and his or her staff.
- Send an e-mail with pictures from the event to your distribution list and post them on your website, Facebook and Twitter feed.

Creating the Perfect Press Event

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Events are a great way to highlight your issue and to attract media attention. There are a few things to consider when planning an event to make it newsworthy!

What Resources do I need?

In general, if you are contemplating staging any type of a large event rather than a personal action, there is a basic checklist that you will need to review:

- **People:** How many people will it take for the event to both be and look successful? Where will those people come from? How do I get them to attend?
- **Organization:** Are there others that can help me pull off this event? How many other people do I need? What roles can I assign them? Do I need to train them on their role?
- **Money:** Is there a cost with putting on this type of an event? If so, how will I cover those costs?
- **Time:** Is anything else going on that would conflict with my event? Holidays? Big community events? Football games? If so, do I need to schedule my event for a different time? Do I have enough time to successfully hold the event?

“Rules of the Road”

When you are putting on an event that has media coverage or attention as its goal, there are a few rules that you should keep in mind for it to be successful:

- **Size:** It doesn't matter if you have 50 people or 500 – what makes the difference is how you have managed external expectations and the size of the location. Fifty people can make a small conference room look crowded, but those same 50 people will be overshadowed at an outdoor venue. In addition, you need to be able to control the size of your space – employing furniture or plants or other space-takers to reduce or enlarge your area, depending on what is needed.
- **Numbers:** For events such as petition drives or postcard campaigns, you need to again manage expectations about what is a successful effort. If you declare that you will collect 2000 signatures on a petition, and you only get 500, that will be reported as a lack of interest. However, if you set up the expectation that you can collect 100, and your efforts result in 500, it is an overwhelming success and show of support.
- **“Official” attendance:** If your stated goal is to have political candidates, special guests, speakers or media in attendance, your event will only be seen as a success if the promised “draw” arrives and participates.

General Tips

Some basic tips to help your event receive press coverage:

- Send a media advisory 2-3 days before your event. A media advisory is a short invitation to press with the who, what, when, where, and why of the news. Make calls to reporters and assignment editors once you send your media advisory to “pitch” the event.
- The media may or may not be interested in your event, so you need to factor in what makes it different or unique in your “pitch.” You will need to talk directly to news organizations and be ready to tailor your argument for coverage based on their particular interests.
- Never hold an event on a Monday. You want to give reminder calls to reporters the day before the event.
- Think about the backdrop and how it will look on camera. If you have a logo, display it. Also, check acoustics of the room and double-check all AV equipment.

Let us know how it went! Send any news clips from your event to info@nationalskillscoalition.org.

Asking Questions at Candidate Events

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Candidate Events

Candidate events are a fantastic way to get candidates on the record about their position on workforce development issues. Do they favor investing more in workforce development programs? How, as governor, will they align policies to prepare workers in the state for the jobs that are going unfilled? This is also an opportunity to make a connection with the candidate or his or her staff.

Additionally, you will have the opportunity – since reporters often attend candidate events – to talk with reporters who are covering the election and provide them information that they can then use when following up with the candidate.

Below are some tips to help you make the most out of attending a candidate event.

Prepare!

- **Learn about upcoming events.** Candidates' websites will often have a calendar of events that are open to the public. Often, they will send emails announcing upcoming events. Sign up for their email lists to receive these updates.
- **Do your homework.** Familiarize yourself with the candidate's position on workforce development issues. Have they talked about job training and adult education? Check the candidate's website and see if they have a position on anything related to workforce development. Have they held office in the past? Have they voted on any bills related to workforce development?
- **Decide who is attending the event.** It must be someone who is comfortable asking a question in public. Someone with a background related to the question – an employer, a training participant, or someone on unemployment – may help reinforce the point you are trying to make at the event.
- **Write out your question(s).** This will help you stay focused and on point. Bring copies of your questions and other background information to provide campaign staff and media that are attending the event.

Asking Your Question

- **Keep it short and to the point.** Over explaining risks giving the candidate an opening to duck the question. Instead, keep your question short and to the point.
- **Avoid asking general questions.** They are too easy for the candidates to answer with boilerplate talking points. Instead, read up on the major issues that you want to ask about so that you can ask a more pointed question.



At the Event

- **Introduce yourself and then ask your question.** Make sure the candidate – and audience – knows who you are and who you represent.
- **Ask a follow-up question if you don't get an answer.** Sometimes candidates fail to answer the question they are asked. It's okay to say they didn't answer your question and restate it.
- **Find reporters that are in the room.** Often reporters will be wearing their credentials, making it easy to spot them. Approach the reporters. If it's before the event, tell them the question(s) you plan to ask and provide them with the background materials you brought. If you speak with them after the event, tell them why your question is important and let them know whether or not the candidate's answer was satisfactory. Also provide them with your background materials.
- **Talk with campaign staff at the event.** Provide the staffer with your background materials and contact information and tell them you would like the opportunity – if you haven't already – to talk with the campaign's policy staff.

Following the Event

- **Send a thank you note to the candidate, staff and reporters with whom you spoke.** Thank the candidate for answering your question and sell workforce development as an issue they should focus on. If a reporter wrote a story following the event that included the candidate's answer to the question you asked, thank them and let them know they can contact you if they have any workforce development questions.

Sample Questions to Ask at Gubernatorial Candidate Events

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- Our state is facing a middle-skills gap -- not enough workers have the skills employers are looking for, skills that require training past high school but not a four-year degree. Despite this being a nation-wide problem, the federal government has cut funding drastically over the past four years. How will you fix this problem and ensure our state is doing a better job of being responsive to employers' needs for middle-skill workers?
- Middle-skill jobs – jobs, which require training past high school but not a four-year degree make up the largest percentage of jobs and are going unfilled because not enough workers have in-demand middle-skill credentials. But [STATE] is spending significantly less on getting people middle-skill credentials than on getting people bachelor's degrees. What would you do about this?
- Too many adults in our state lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills that employer are looking for, or even to successfully complete technical training that could lead to a good-paying job. As governor, what would you do to help these adults improve their literacy and numeracy skills?
- For years, our state's focus has been on preparing students to go to a four-year college instead of technical job training programs that lead to good-paying. What would you do as governor to ensure there are multiple pathways to a successful career and a successful life?
- Some states are making consumer report cards available online that show the results of postsecondary education and training programs at institutions in the state – such as how many students graduate, how many get jobs, and what those jobs pay. What would you do as governor to make this information available?
- Many states link data across education and workforce programs to help assess the effectiveness of human capital policies. Do you support state investment in data systems? How would you use data to inform decisions about the state's workforce development efforts?



How to Conduct an Editorial Board Meeting

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The editorial page is the most widely read page in a newspaper. Candidates pay attention to this page as they are focusing on issues they talk about on the campaign trail. Eventually, all gubernatorial candidates will meet with editorials boards during the campaign. Having a favorable editorial appear will likely lead to candidates being questioned about the issue by the editorial board and at other times during the campaign.

It's important to note that an editorial is different from an op-ed. Editorials are written by staff at the newspaper and express the paper's opinion on an issue. Op-eds may be written by staff or outside contributors and express solely the author's opinion.

The following offers tips on requesting, preparing for and conducting an editorial board meeting, as well as basic information about how a newspaper's editorial page generally operates.

What is an Editorial Board Meeting

The editorial board is comprised of the writers and editors of the editorial page. Large papers have several editorial page staff. Some editorial staff have their own beats. Smaller papers usually only have one editorial writer and an editorial page editor that comprise the board.

An editorial board meeting with a local or regional newspaper provides you with the opportunity to get across your point of view to the people who determine what the newspaper's opinion will be about a particular issue. During the meeting, you sit with the editorial board members, provide information on an issue and ask the paper to consider writing an editorial in support of your position.

Who you meet with will depend both on the size of the newspaper and the scope and priority of your issue. At a larger newspaper, you might meet just with the writer who covers your specific issue area. That writer could also be joined by one or more interested colleagues. At a smaller paper, you're more likely to meet with the entire board because the board itself is smaller and its members are less likely to have assigned issue areas.

When to Request an Editorial Board Meeting

You should request a meeting anytime there is something newsworthy. For example, new job numbers come out, your organization or coalition has released its policy platform, or a newspaper prints one or more editorials opposing your position and you want to share your side of the story with the board.



In general, this meeting provides an opportunity to influence the board's opinions in your favor or, if the paper seems likely to oppose your viewpoint, gives you the opportunity to try to move the coverage of your issue in a more favorable direction.

How to Request an Editorial Board Meeting

In preparation for scheduling the meeting, research editorial coverage to see if they have editorialized on your issues in the past. Decide who should attend the editorial board meeting. It should be people who are all on the same page and able to articulate your policy positions.

Send an editorial board meeting request letter. See the sample letter included in this toolkit. If you can find out the name of the person who writes on your issue, address the letter to him or her. NSC can help with determining who the meeting request should be addressed to. If you're unable to determine the best contact, address the letter to the editorial page editor.

When asking for a meeting, briefly outline your position, the people who will attend, and suggest a timeframe for the meeting, such as a few days of a particular week. If there is a reason the meeting is timely, be sure to include that.

Preparing for the Meeting

Once you have scheduled a meeting, ask if you should send materials in advance or bring them with you. A background packet should include your coalition's policy platform and appropriate press releases, fact sheets and op-eds that relate to your issue. You may also include past editorials on the issue written by that paper.

Everyone attending the meeting should talk beforehand about who will speak and what will be said. Designate someone to take the lead and assign each person a role. Brainstorm all the questions you might be asked. You may have as little as 15 minutes to make your case. Be prepared.

During the Meeting

At the meeting, the lead should outline the meeting, ask all participants to introduce themselves, and ask each person to speak for three to five minutes on their specific area of the issue. During Q&A, the lead should direct questions asked by the board to the appropriate participant. Finish the meeting by asking the board to editorialize on your issue.

Following the Meeting

Follow up after the meeting with a letter thanking the editorial board members who attended the meeting for their time and restating your position. Include any materials that you promised to send.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL BOARD REQUEST LETTER

TO: [Name], Editor
FROM: [Your Name, Organization]
RE: Editorial Board Meeting Request
DATE: [Today's Date]

I am writing on behalf of [ORGANIZATION/COALITION'S NAME] to request an opportunity to meet with members of your editorial board to discuss our state's workforce development system. [NAME AND TITLE] will accompany me.

Middle-skill jobs, which require more than high-school, but not a four-year degree, make up the largest part of [STATE] labor market. All too often, key industries in [STATE] are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs. As a result, job creation and economic growth are stifled. We can't afford that.

Years ago, a number of workforce development programs were established to meet this demand by preparing [STATE] workers for middle-skill jobs. But in recent years, federal investments have dwindled. As a result, in [STATE] too many workers struggle to find decent jobs and too many employers struggle to find skilled employees. [STATE] must now step up and provide new investments in adult education and job training to ensure our workers have the skills needed to fill the jobs employers need to fill so our state's industries can grow. We need hear from candidates running for governor how they will better prepare [STATE's] workforce.

We hope that members of the [NAME OF PAPER] Editorial Board will meet with us to discuss how [STATE] can better prepare our workforce for jobs that are available now, and will be available in the near future.

I have attached some background information about [our coalition \ middle skills fact sheet \ policy briefs]. I may be reached at [TELEPHONE NUMBER] or by email at [EMAIL ADDRESS]. We are looking forward to meeting with you soon.

Thank you.

[Name]

Where's the debate on worker shortage?

Governor candidates should lay out plans.

REGISTER EDITORIAL BOARD

Published September 19, 2006

Iowa's People Drought

- The Register's editorial-page staff is examining the state's shifting demographics in a series of special reports called "**Iowa's People Drought.**"
- Read more about the **Iowa Works Campaign** and click the "in the states" section and "local and state field organizing."

The biggest challenge to Iowa's future isn't getting much discussion in the campaign for governor.

Perhaps that's because the challenge is too big. It doesn't lend itself to sound bites in 30-second commercials.

Or perhaps that's because it is unprecedented. Nothing like it has occurred in Iowa before, so it lies outside the usual framework for political debate.

But make no mistake. Within the next decade, Iowa will face a problem it is not prepared to face – a demographic crunch that could put the state off-limits to new industry and might drive existing businesses elsewhere.

With workers from the baby-boom generation nearing retirement, and with a much smaller cohort of younger workers to replace them, Iowa soon will have more jobs than it has workers to fill them.

It's estimated Iowa will have 150,000 more jobs than workers by 2012, and it could get worse thereafter.

Of course, there won't actually be 150,000 more jobs than workers. Those jobs will simply move someplace else. The loss will be incalculable both to the economy and the social fabric of the state.

The 2012 worker-shortage estimate was part of a "call to action" issued last week by the Iowa Works Campaign, a coalition of business, labor, educational and social-services organizations. It warned bluntly: "Iowa is approaching a demographic cliff."

The business community has long warned that a future shortage of skilled workers will stunt Iowa's growth, and the governor's strategic planning commission made attracting more people to Iowa one of its top goals.

The looming crisis seen by the business community, however, has not translated into any sense of urgency in the Legislature or in the political debate.

The state remains locked into policies and economic-development tools that do not address the worker shortage and, in fact, might make it worse.

For instance, by reducing support for the universities and community colleges, the state has forced schools to raise tuition, which is an impediment for potential workers to acquire or upgrade critically needed skills.

By targeting tax breaks and other incentives to employers and upper-income executives generally, the state thinks it can attract more industry. But no amount of incentives will entice an industry into a state with a shortage of skilled workers.

The Iowa Works Campaign made four recommendations for developing the workforce. Key among them was to provide all Iowans access to lifelong skills training and other educational opportunities.

The campaign noted that one way to expand the number of skilled workers is to resume the education of Iowans who dropped out of school or didn't go beyond high school. Another way is to help people acquire new skills and encourage people to work beyond traditional retirement age.

The only likely source of many new workers is immigration, but most immigrants require education and training to meet the demand for skilled workers. That's another argument for beefing up education and training in Iowa, and reducing its cost to students.

Beyond its specific recommendations, the Iowa Works Campaign urged that investments in "human capital" should represent the centerpiece of Iowa's economic-development policy.

That would be a sea change in Iowa policy, which has been geared toward subsidizing employers rather than investing in workers.

Would Chet Culver and Jim Nussle support shifting the emphasis toward human capital? What other thoughts do the candidates for governor have about how to pull back from the edge of a demographic abyss?

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The issue: The people drought

More focus needed on looming worker shortage

By REGISTER EDITORIAL BOARD

Published October 25, 2006

It's not clear whether either candidate for governor really grasps how profoundly the playing field is about to change.

In the next few decades, Iowa will face a threat to our state's economy unlike anything experienced before.

We're not talking about the exodus of educated young people that has been a fact of life in Iowa for generations. The new threat is something more.

In the past, despite the out-migration of college graduates, enough people remained to fill the jobs in Iowa's factories and offices. That's about to change.

As members of the baby-boom generation begin to retire in the next few years, there simply won't be enough younger people in Iowa to replace them – even if the state somehow manages to stem the out-migration.

It's estimated that Iowa will have 150,000 more jobs than workers by 2012, and it could get much worse thereafter. Rather than new businesses coming to Iowa, the specter is of businesses leaving Iowa because they won't be able to hire enough workers.

This is a conundrum neither candidate for governor has adequately addressed. Both offer more or less traditional economic-development proposals intended to lure jobs to Iowa, perhaps in the belief that if they bring jobs, workers will follow.

That's a dubious assumption, especially when the potential worker shortage due to the retirement of the baby-boom generation is not limited to Iowa. Many states will be scrambling for workers in a few years. The new economic competition among states will be less about attracting jobs than it will be about attracting working-age people.

As a starting point, both candidates are smart to focus on strengthening education. Skilled workers won't stay and promising recruits won't come without top-notch public schools, community colleges and universities that train Iowans to compete against the best minds in the world.

Otherwise, though, while the platforms of both candidates contain some elements meant to make Iowa a more attractive place to live, they tend to be mentioned almost as afterthoughts. Whoever becomes governor will need to shift gears, so that drawing people to Iowa becomes not just the ancillary part of an economic-development strategy, but the core of it.

Bottom line: Another “no decision”

Neither has separated himself by laying out a clear strategy to address this threat to Iowa’s economic future.

The Register asked each of the candidates three questions about the future workforce shortage. Here are their written responses:

Iowa doesn’t have enough high school students in the pipeline to replace all the workers who are expected to retire in the next few decades. What would you do to draw more people to Iowa, so a serious shortage of workers can be avoided?

JIM NUSSLE, REPUBLICAN

Iowa’s people and quality of life should be our trademark. We have an opportunity to promote our strong quality of life as long as we are an attractive place to live, work, go to school and someday retire. There’s no reason Iowa cannot be the “Education Destination,” more attractive for job creators and entrepreneurial businesses, lead the nation in access to affordable, high-quality health care or provide a friendly climate so our seniors can retire here in dignity.

CHET CULVER, DEMOCRAT

By making the alternative-energy industry the primary focus of our economic-development efforts, we will make Iowa a leader in the high-paying jobs of the future that attract talented people and their families to our state. We will attract millions of dollars in new federal and private-sector funding for research and development of energy technologies and target existing research funding toward this exciting industry to keep Iowa’s college graduates here. High-paying jobs in growth industries, combined with Iowa’s strength in education and excellent quality of life, will bring families to our state and encourage them to stay.

Iowa’s workforce has been called at once its greatest asset and its biggest liability. An asset because of Iowans’ work ethic; a liability because businesses worry about a shortage in the number of workers. What would you do to develop a larger and more skilled workforce in Iowa?

NUSSLE

I want our state to be the “Education Destination” so we can grow Iowa and create limitless opportunities for generations to come. We must connect education to occupation so our students receive an education aimed at the career fields of the 21st century and our current workforce is being properly training to continue providing businesses with qualified workers. I have proposed the creation of Iowa Job Skill Centers and Iowa Achievement Academies that will boost collaboration between Iowa high schools, colleges and local businesses to ensure that both non-college and college-bound high school students have access to career development, job training and internships. I have also proposed the Learn & Earn College Program to provide access to essentially free in-state, undergraduate tuition at any Iowa college for middle and low-income Iowans who stay in Iowa for seven years post-graduation.

CULVER

A skilled workforce begins with excellence in education. I will work to expand early-childhood education – studies show that investing in early education pays off many times over in the future success of our children. I will raise teacher pay and make college more affordable by expanding scholarship opportunities, using targeted loan forgiveness for those who remain in Iowa in areas of critical need, and

expanding access to college credits in high school. I will also facilitate strong public-private partnerships at our community colleges so that they are offering training programs specifically designed to meet the skill needs of the state's employers.

What's the point of trying to create more jobs in Iowa if there aren't going to be enough working-age people in the state to fill the jobs we've already got?

NUSSLE

With Iowa's people, strong work ethic, cost of living and exceptional quality of life, there's also no reason we cannot grow Iowa and provide a better place for young Iowans and future generations. We can grow if we look toward the future by creating an environment that fosters entrepreneurial growth and provides exciting opportunities for new industry. I want the jobs of the future to be created in Iowa, so our talented, productive people can invest their capital, add innovative value, become an entrepreneur and start a new business or exciting career. There is tremendous economic opportunity by taking the lead on exploring new, innovative ways to capitalize on our valuable resources. We will be the leader in the new energy economy by bringing together American innovation and our incredible potential for renewable resources.

CULVER

My plan ensures that Iowa's economy thrives by relying on our traditional strengths in education, agriculture and manufacturing, while jump-starting new technologies and attracting industries and jobs that provide good wages and benefits. With that focus, we will not only create exciting job opportunities that keep our children at home here in Iowa, but we will also attract new families to our state. Iowa is the best place in America to raise a family – that's why Mari and I are raising our two kids here. Creating great jobs will bring new families here to experience and contribute to Iowa's terrific quality of life.

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Editorial: Middle-skill jobs offer opportunity for Western Massachusetts

Published: Wednesday, August 11, 2010, 12:31 AM



For nearly three years, Massachusetts has endured a string of dismal employment statistics, but on Monday we saw one number that presents the region with an opportunity and a challenge.

A recent study from by the National Skills Coalition, SkillWorks and the Workforce Solutions Group says that more than 396,000 jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree are expected to open in Massachusetts over the next six years.

The opportunity is there because Massachusetts has the community colleges, vocational schools and training institutes where people can learn middle skill jobs in fields such as health care and manufacturing. Western Massachusetts is filled with high-tech industries whose leaders worry if they will ever find enough skilled workers.

And that presents a challenge, because those programs might not be enough. More money is needed for job training. For example, the state's Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, which seeks to boost the skills and salaries of it workers, lacks funding in the current state budget.

Although the debate over federal spending and the deficit has been heated, we think it is important to make every effort to fund job programs.

High-skilled workers earn more and they pay the taxes needed to cut the deficit. In business it's called return on investment. Unfortunately, what we see is too much rhetoric over unemployment and the deficit, but too little action.

Joseph L. Peters, president of Universal Plastics in Holyoke, gave a concise picture of how job skills have changed in recent years. "Where it used to be that you could bring a guy in off the street who had no training whatsoever, it's no longer the case," he said.

While it's true there are many programs in place to train workers, we think more can be done to train people.

After all, there's nearly 400,000 jobs hanging in the balance, and, as Peters said, you can't grab workers off the street anymore.

Submitting an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

February 2014

What makes for a successful (published) op-ed or letter to the Editor?

The op-ed or letter to the editor should:

- Be timely
- Be well written
- Be brief and clear
- Convey expertise
- Have an unexpected point of view.

How do I place an op-ed?

Know the guidelines: Many times, on a newspaper's opinion page on the website or in their print edition, they will provide guidelines on submitting an op-ed (also known as guest commentary) to the newspaper. Follow their guidelines or else the op-ed will likely not be accepted.

Most newspapers have a word limit between 500-700 words for an op-ed. Submit an op-ed under the word limit or else you risk the newspaper editing your opinion piece to fit their word limit.

Pitch your idea: When you email your op-ed, include a 2-3 sentence pitch for why they should publish your op-ed. The pitch should include what you are writing about, why this is news (why would readers care), and why your opinion matters (include your credentials). Below your pitch, paste your finished op-ed. Make sure to include your contact information: name, title, address, phone number, and email address.

Follow-up: Do follow-up. If possible, find out who makes the decision on publishing op-eds at that newspaper. Call them and ask them if they received your op-ed and when they will be making their decision on whether or not they will publish it. Give yourself a time limit for a decision, especially if your op-ed is time sensitive. If you decide to pitch your op-ed elsewhere, let the newspaper know you are withdrawing your submission.

Thank the editor: If they decide to publish your op-ed, thank them for the opportunity to give space to the idea or issue. If they will not publish your op-ed, thank them for their consideration. Feel free to ask them if there is a reason they decided against publishing the op-ed. This could begin a conversation that will eventually lead to them publishing your opinion piece.

How do I get a letter to the editor published?

On the opinion webpage of most newspapers, they will provide directions on how to submit a letter to the editor to the newspaper. Some will have a web form to submit the letter. Others will provide an email address. They may also provide a word limit for letters to the editor. Generally, letters to the editor are between 200-300 words. Do not go past the word limit. Be sure to include your contact information: name, title, address, phone number, and email address.

I got my Op-Ed/Letter to the Editor published. What now?

Send National Skills Coalition a copy at info@nationalskillscoalition.org. Send a copy of the op-ed or letter to the editor to a candidate's campaign to let them see that your opinion got published.



Time, skill needed to fix economy

By Loh-Sze Leung and Nancy Snyder Sunday, August 8, 2010

With unemployment hovering around 9 percent in Massachusetts and higher in other parts of the country, policymakers and average citizens alike are looking for the magic bullet to help people get back to work. Unfortunately, time and experience have shown that there is no such quick fix.

In Massachusetts, we are focused on fields in which there is documented job demand: Health care, life sciences, clean energy and technology are among the industries that are hiring in targeted occupations. The state and philanthropic community have made a collective, substantial investment in job training closely linked to industry demand. That investment is paying off.

In Massachusetts, 45 percent of the jobs are middle-skill - requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. Last week, the Massachusetts Forgotten Middle Skill Jobs report revealed that nearly 400,000 job openings between now and 2016 will be considered middle-skill. However, only 32 percent of our workforce likely has the skills to fill these jobs.

The bottom line is that even in a recession, there are still employers who are ready to hire but cannot find workers who meet the qualifications and have the right set of skills.

In the greater Boston area, Shire Pharmaceutical is expanding its manufacturing facility and needs dozens of new employees for positions such as manufacturing operator and quality control technician that require training but not a four-year degree. Beth **Israel** Deaconess Medical Center wants to hire more than 75 middle-skill jobs, including medical assistants, patient-care technicians and histotechnicians.

Some of these positions have been challenging to fill because the annual number of graduates in the field is insufficient to meet local demand, so the employers have developed internal programs and partnered with community colleges to train people for middle-skill jobs, and graduates are assured employment upon completion of the program.

Growing the number of middle-skill people in our state is not an overnight proposition, nor is it a problem that will be solved through short-term training. Businesses need to be a growing part of the solution and some companies are making substantial investments in workforce training. But not all of our companies are there yet.

The workforce training and higher education sectors also need to better connect in ways that increase the number of people who complete post-secondary education while also using their time and resources well. Our public, private and philanthropic investments in building a skilled workforce for jobs that are in demand are essential to our state's productivity, competitiveness and growth.

Job training for high-demand jobs, offering individuals skills and certifications aligned with industry needs, can be a useful catalyst for jump-starting the economy and helping to solve the problem of unemployment.

Loh-Sze Leung is the executive director of SkillWorks: Partners for a Productive Workforce. Nancy Snyder is president of the Commonwealth Corporation.

Article URL: http://www.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/op_ed/view.bg?articleid=1272987



Job training

During these troubling economic times, some may wonder if investment in a college education will pay off. But avoiding post-secondary education altogether won't pay off either. In fact it would threaten the strength of Illinois' economy.

A recent report released by the Skills2Compete-Illinois campaign showed that middle-skill jobs (those that require more than high school but less than four years of college) continue to be the largest number of jobs in Illinois' economy. This will not change. Nearly 1 million openings in the middle-skill job market are projected for the state by 2014.

To capitalize on the value of post-secondary education, Illinois needs a new vision for education and skill development. Illinois must have diverse educational pathways to good-paying jobs, and this includes college certificates and degrees.

Despite current and future skill demands, close to 60 percent of workers in Illinois do not have the education and training required to fill middle-skill jobs. These jobs are the backbone of our communities; they include firefighters, nurses, electricians, truck drivers and medical lab technicians—jobs we can't afford to outsource and we just plain can't live without.

We need to make training and preparing adults currently in the work force a key part of our education strategy. There will always be jobs that require four years of college and more, but we must look beyond traditional pathways and, at a minimum, make sure that all Illinoisans have access to up to two years of education or training past high school.



Thomas

—Carrie Thomas, associate director, Chicago Jobs Council; co-lead, Skills2Compete-Illinois Campaign

Getting Your Message Out on the Radio

February 2014

Radio shows provide an opportunity to get your message out to a wider audience. Many radio stations, particularly as Election Day nears, will invite candidates on their show for an interview. This is an opportunity to ask the candidate a question. Below are some tips if you are calling in to a radio show. *Remember: make sure you have good cell phone reception or are using a landline if you are calling in to the show.*

Before You Call

- Know the format. Listen to the show so you can call in at an appropriate time to make your comment.
- Find out if the show is taped or live. If the program is taped, the show may take calls at a different time than it airs.
- Unless there is an open forum where callers can “sound off,” make sure your comment relates to the topic(s) being discussed.
- Know the audience of the show. Is it a conservative talk show or is it more liberal?
- Practice what you want to say out loud to yourself or to someone else.
- Relax! Write your comment down so you don’t forget what you want to say.

Making The Call

Call early in the show. The earlier you call, the more likely the show will take your call. If you don’t get through the first time, keep trying. Make sure to listen from the beginning of the show so you are not repeating what has already been asked or said.

During The Call

Have a plan. You will only have a brief time to speak – don’t call-in unprepared. Be courteous and maintain the high ground. Do not allow yourself to get drawn in to an argument or shouting match. Do not belittle other callers or the host.

Make it On The Show?

If so, let us know how it went. Send us an email at info@nationalskillscoalition.org.



Outreach to Blogs

February 2014

Blogs follow different rules than traditional media. While each blog is different and may interact and communicate differently with their followers, there are a few tips to successfully navigate the blogosphere:

Reaching Out to Blogs

- Check out blogs on your community. Find blogs that write about your issue or that write about politics in your state. The Washington Post's "The Fix" blog has compiled a list of the each state's best political blogs: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/03/12/the-fixs-best-state-based-political-blogs-extended-edition/>.
- Post comments in response to blog posts on your issue in order for the blog owner and readers to get to know you.
- Send the owner of the blog a short email introducing yourself and a short description of the issue you are working on.
- If they allow others to post on their blog, ask if they would consider posting a blog post from you.
- Instead of sending them a press release, as you would with traditional media, send them a couple of short paragraphs about the topic of the press release and hyperlink to where they can get more information.
- Be responsive. Blogs run on an even tighter news cycle than traditional media. Newspapers are only printed once a day. The local TV news station only airs once in the morning, evening, and at night. Blogs are posting 24 hours a day, seven days a week. While they can update their posts, it is generally better to get them the information they need as quickly as possible.

Writing a Blog Post

Whether you are writing for your blog or writing a post for another blog, there are some best practices to keep in mind:

- Keep your posts short and sweet. Aim at keeping your posts at about 250 words.
- Tell as much of the story as you can in the headline. Lots of people use an RSS or news feeder to scan blog headlines. They decide after seeing the headline whether to click into the post.
- Write in short paragraphs, not big blocks of text. It makes reading from the screen easier. Similarly, keep your sentences relatively short.



- As you are writing your post, ask yourself—is the topic clear? Does the first paragraph give the who, what, where, when and why? Is there anything unique about your story? Could someone who doesn't know anything about your subject understand your post?
- Provide links where appropriate. If you mention a newspaper article, blog, or website, provide a link to it. You may also want to link to information that clarifies or gives background on information and opinions in your post.
- Never lose your sense of humor. People are more likely to read a blog post that is lively, engaging and written in a conversational tone. And don't be afraid to express an opinion.
- Before posting your blog entry, read it out loud. Make sure you don't get stuck on complex sentence construction. If you trip on a word in the midst of reading a sentence aloud, use another word or rewrite the sentence.
- If you are posting to someone else's blog, be sure to include some basics—who you are and what you're doing there.

Engaging Candidates on Social Media

February 2014

Social media is a quick and easy way to continuously engage with gubernatorial candidates in your state and keep workforce issues front and center. Nearly all candidates can be found on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and monitor online conversations on their high priority issues. You can use these tools before and after meetings and events with candidates to inform a broader audience and get more eyes on the candidate and his or her position on these important issues. They can also be used to keep the conversation going, to share informational materials, and to amplify your message.

Below are sample posts for Facebook and Twitter. Please feel free to use these samples as a template or create your own. Be sure to follow NSC on Twitter @SkillsCoalition and Facebook at [facebook.com/nationalskillscoalition](https://www.facebook.com/nationalskillscoalition). On Twitter, use the hashtags #wkdev and #skillsgap in your posts as appropriate to contribute to the conversations already surrounding these issues.

Sample Twitter Messaging

When Hosting Site Visits or Attending Candidate Events

- Excited to have @CANDIDATE at [ORG NAME] to see how our programs are preparing workers for jobs, closing the #skillsgap! #wkdev
- Thanks to @CANDIDATE for stopping by to discuss how we can work together on #wkdev issues, closing the #skillsgap!
- Off to @CANDIDATE's Town Hall! Hope to hear good discussion & strong ideas about strengthening #wkdev in [STATE]!
- Great Town Hall meeting w/ @CANDIDATE! Here are those #wkdev stats on [ISSUE] that we talked about. More where that came from!

Sample Facebook Messaging

When Hosting Site Visits or Attending Candidate Events

- We're excited to host @CANDIDATE here at [ORG NAME] today to take a tour and learn about our workforce programs that are vital to our community and the whole state. We've got lots of questions for [him/her], too!
- [POST PICTURE] Thanks to @CANDIDATE for coming on site today to learn about our important workforce programs!

- We're off to @CANDIDATE's Town Hall! Interested to find out about [his/her] plans for workforce development in the state. What questions would you like us to ask?

General Twitter Messaging

- There's a #skillsgap in our state & too many people out of work. @CANDIDATE, as governor, what will you do to strengthen #wkdev?
- Largest % of jobs are middle-skill, but spending on training is less than other levels of ed. How would you change #wkdev investments?
- Employers are struggling to fill available jobs. How will you make sure [STATE] is responsive to employer needs? #wkdev

Sample Posts to Facebook Pages of Candidates

- Too many adults in our state lack the basic skills that employers are looking for, or even the skills to successfully complete technical training that could lead to a good-paying job. As governor, what would you do to help these low-skilled adults?
- For years, our state's focus has been on preparing students to go to a four-year college instead of technical job training programs that lead to good-paying. Do you believe there are multiple pathways to a successful career and a successful life, or do you believe that all people should pursue a four-year college degree?
- Employers throughout the state in key industries are reporting that they are struggling to find workers with the skills necessary to fill the jobs they have available. How will you fix this problem and ensure our state is doing a better job of being responsive to employers' needs for middle-skill workers?