

# Policy Recommendations

**America needs to build a diverse, modern and world-class workforce for innovation across all sectors of the economy. The country should have the best education system and the most skilled workforce globally. Over the next decade, the United States needs to significantly reduce the shortage of highly skilled workers. The United States should have an education system that fully unlocks the potential of its human capital and boosts its rank in science and math education to the elite, top 10 level.**

## Build a pipeline of students with globally competitive 21st-century skills.

The public and private sector should work together to create and maintain partnerships among educational institutions, employers, state and local leadership, and the federal government to promote work-based learning and meet shifting and increasingly dynamic workforce demands.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

**Increase training at educational institutions for in-demand skills.** The United States should expand opportunities for students to gain exposure to and training and/or retraining in the high-demand technical and foundational skills needed to thrive in the new economy in the following ways:

- a. Congress should ensure that the Higher Education Act reauthorization includes expanded Workforce Pell Grants and opens the Federal Pell Grant system to short-term skilled worker education programs.
- b. Employers and educational leaders should engage with Congress and educational policymakers to align funding priorities with labor market realities. This effort should include partnering with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that career and technical education programs culminate in meaningful credentials or industry certifications in high-demand, high-skill fields.
- c. Congress should reform the Federal Work-Study system to allow for off-campus, work-based learning opportunities.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

**Partner with the education system to shorten pathways to jobs for individuals with recognized skills.** Education policymakers should ensure that federal and state workforce preparedness policies, developed in partnership and collaboration with employers, promote standardized credentials that reflect proof-of-skill attainment in high-demand skillsets and are portable across industries. Students and workers should receive credit for mastery achieved in a range of professional careers (e.g., military). They should also have access to high-quality certificate programs that efficiently deliver training resources beyond the framework of bachelor's degree programs.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**Align education with job opportunities.** Education policymakers should create new linkages between educators and employers so that students receive the most up-to-date, relevant education in the foundational and technical skills that are needed in today's workplace. Education systems need resources and incentives to constantly shift their offerings to realign with the workforce of the future and increase the transparency of their employment-related outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

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**Bolster STEM education and digital proficiency at all levels.** U.S. leaders across the public and private sectors should build a national culture that strongly values STEM education.

- a. Policymakers should update and expand STEM education offerings and graduation requirements, including those in computer science and information technology, and work to increase student participation and representation in STEM.
- b. State policymakers and educators should strengthen preparation and professional development programs using research-based practices to improve STEM instruction in K-12 education.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

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**Invest in foundational skills and proficiencies.** Education policymakers should focus education programs and investments on the building blocks of strong educational performance by working to boost proficiency in fundamental skills such as teamwork, communication and adaptability, as well as literacy, digital skills and mathematics.

### **Design workforce training and preparedness for the future.**

Policymakers should make investments in workforce training that reflect the needs of the changing workforce by emphasizing flexible and portable resources that meet workers at any stage of their careers.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

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### **Expand pathways between education and the workplace.**

Congress and state and local policymakers should expand the use of well-proven models of skilled worker training and education, such as community college partnerships and other private-public models, that provide pathways between high school, postsecondary education and training, and entry-level positions. These programs should be responsive to local economies and align training and education with the needs of the evolving labor market.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

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### **Expand apprenticeships and work-based learning.**

Congress and state and local policymakers should support private-sector efforts to expand apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities, such as internships. These learning and training programs should be continuous and available to workers not just at the start of but throughout their careers.

## RECOMMENDATION 8

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**Leverage company investment in worker training.** Congress and state and local policymakers should encourage and facilitate partnerships to leverage private company investments in worker training and life-long learning programs that are consistent with shifts in high-demand skillsets and are customizable to workers' needs and interests, such as portable workforce training accounts.

## RECOMMENDATION 9

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### **Leverage technology to improve training options.**

Employers and credentialing organizations should increase acceptance of digital platforms that award and track certifications to facilitate a skills marketplace for the workforce of the future, enabling the efficient delivery of useful and high-quality skill-building resources (e.g., through massive open online courses).

### **Attract and retain the best and the brightest global talent.**

The United States should build a globally competitive workforce and become the top global destination for talent with 21st-century technical and job skills.

## RECOMMENDATION 10

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**Increase visas for skilled workers.** The federal government should increase the availability of H-1B temporary visas for high-skilled professionals and maintain the employment authorization for H-4 dependent spouses.

## RECOMMENDATION 11

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**Improve the predictability of adjudications of skilled worker visa petitions.** The federal government should improve the transparency and consistency of adjudication processes to ensure predictable treatment of petitions for high-skilled workers.

## RECOMMENDATION 12

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**Retain highly skilled international students.** The U.S. government should retain highly skilled international students who have advanced degrees in a STEM field from a U.S. institution by:

- a.** Providing an automatic green card for graduates in STEM fields, exempting individuals with special skills (e.g., STEM) from the 140,000-visa cap and eliminating the per-country limit for employment-based immigration.
- b.** Maintaining authorization for the Optional Practical Training period for student visas in qualifying STEM fields.