

SETTING THE 08 EDUCATION AGENDA FOR THE NATION

Education as an Engine for Regional Economic and Workforce Development

Problem: Lack of business innovation and skill shortages in high-demand fields are strangling the life out of many regional economies.

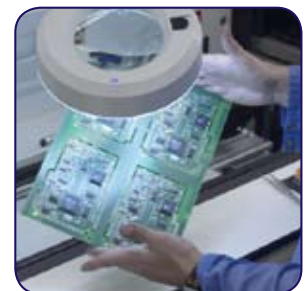
Solution: Engage education systems from preschool through postgraduate education in efforts to revitalize struggling regional economies.

What you can do:

- ◆ Expand the Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development Program. Empower regions to create strategies that align education and workforce training with the industries that are critical to each region's vitality.
- ◆ Create a National College Ready/Work Ready Initiative to encourage states, districts and schools to develop the level of curriculum and assessments necessary to ensure all students are prepared for success in a workforce or postsecondary setting.
- ◆ Provide incentives to postsecondary institutions to conduct research. Offer academic programs that meet critical economic workforce needs in the regions where they reside.

What results do we want?

- ◆ All students graduate from high school both college- and work-ready
- ◆ Education institutions provide training and conduct research that respond directly to regional economic and workforce needs
- ◆ A workforce that has both transferable and targeted skills to leverage regional economic strengths
- ◆ Reduced economic disparities, revitalized communities and increased U.S. competitiveness.



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What are the policy questions?

- ♦ Designing targeted training in high-need fields without reducing access to the full range of postsecondary choices available to students
- ♦ Meeting current economic and workforce needs, while anticipating future needs
- ♦ Aligning systems to support the full diversity of students to include traditional-age students, low-skilled adults and adults returning to education for retraining
- ♦ In a number of states, it is extremely unlikely that the projected need for highly skilled workers will be met through the increased migration of college educated workers. It is increasingly important, then, to recognize that increases in college participation and graduation among a state's residents are essential to meet future demands.

What components of quality policies could address these questions?

- ♦ Address the capacity of education institutions to continuously identify high-demand skills, customize curriculum, assess student performance and train teachers in a rapidly changing, information-based economy
- ♦ Include incentives for institutions to provide education and training in high-demand skills and fields
- ♦ Create seamless opportunities for students to move back and forth between the workforce and education
- ♦ Provide incentives for pipeline initiatives that focus on diversity and career pathways via approaches that have demonstrated success in medicine and in other careers.

What landmines might policymakers face?

- ♦ Balancing the traditional independence of our education institutions with a need for them to be more market responsive
- ♦ Effectively convening employers, educators and policymakers to jointly assess the needs of the regional economy and act to address needs, without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.



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