



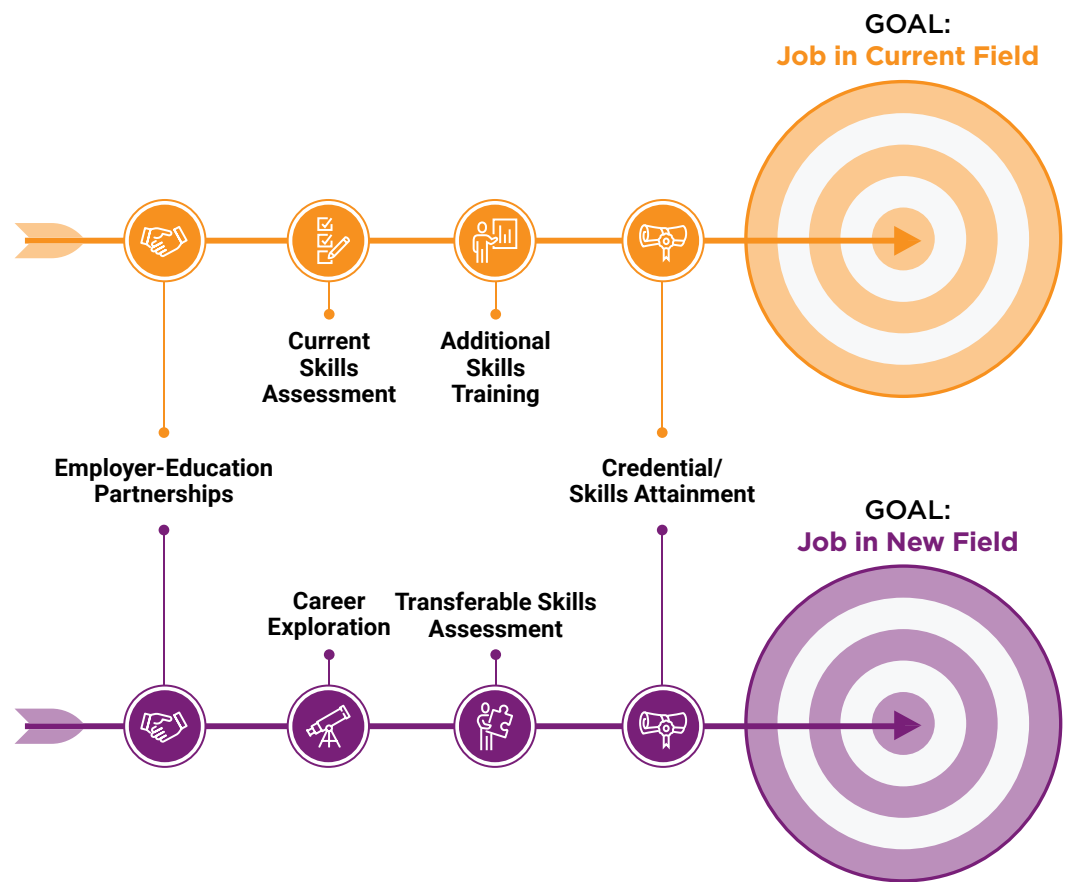
UPSKILLING & RESKILLING



OVERVIEW

Upskilling and reskilling refer to efforts to give people skills that in-demand occupations require. When people upskill, they enhance their skills in their current career fields. When people reskill, they acquire skills in new areas or career fields. People who are under- or unemployed often seek opportunities to upskill or reskill. States also have identified upskilling and reskilling as needed policy pathways to ensure they meet workforce demands.

During economic downturns, states see higher unemployment rates and lower labor market participation rates. Even in more prosperous times, **the growth of** artificial intelligence and work automation creates an environment where employers demand new skills from workers. Collectively, these conditions have accelerated shifts in high-demand occupations and the skills people need to access **good jobs**. To support these activities, states have created partnerships between employers and educational institutions, such as community and technical colleges, to create clear and aligned pathways into high-demand occupations.



COVID-19 IMPACT

Data gathered during the pandemic indicate that roughly half of Americans lost jobs, income or working hours. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the conversation around upskilling and reskilling, as unemployment numbers increase and **people indicate** that they would seek additional education and training to access in-demand occupations. The COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to any face-to-face, on-the-job training required for certain credential programs. This disruption creates barriers in the pathways people navigate into the workforce.



EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

High unemployment and lost hours disproportionately affect certain populations, including people of color, people in low-income households and people without postsecondary credentials. Latinx and Black Americans are **most likely** to have been laid off or lost income from work. Additionally, as shifts in high-demand occupations correspond to changing economic need, **low-wage workers** are at a higher risk of falling behind without opportunities to upskill or reskill.



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Assess the quality of **state-level data** and coordinate data-sharing across education and workforce sectors. This allows states to identify high-demand occupations.
- Analyze historical workforce and educational data to identify and address opportunity gaps for women, people of color, and individuals from lower-income communities who are accessing upskilling and reskilling opportunities.
- Align training and education with workforce needs to create direct pathways into high-demand occupations. Create a communication plan for informing the public about those pathways.
- Prioritize partnerships between education and employers, and explore **quality non-degree credentials** that align with workforce needs.



POLICY EXAMPLES

AL **Alabama established** a committee within its workforce development council, bringing industry and other experts together to examine and evaluate specific credentials. The state uses a set of data and criteria to determine if a credential should be included on the state's Compendium of Valuable Credentials.

MI **Michigan** created the Future for Frontliners program to pay tuition for workers in **essential industries** to complete high school or earn an associate degree or certification. Applicants can receive the funds for up to four years or until they complete their educational program.

MS **Mississippi** enacted **legislation** that requires the department of employment security to appropriate funding to workforce investment areas to ensure workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic have access to job training.

UT **Utah** enacted **legislation** that directs financial grants to institutions of higher education to offer short-term programs for people furloughed, laid off, dislocated, underserved or other populations affected by COVID-19. The programs must provide training and education related to industry needs and provide students with certificates or other recognition upon completion.

WA **Washington** created the Worker Retraining program to help pay for training expenses at the state's community and technical colleges and private schools for individuals who lost their jobs because of economic changes and for those receiving unemployment insurance benefits.