



PLAYBOOK: WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS THAT WORK

A STATE AND LOCAL GUIDE TO HIGH-QUALITY,
EQUITABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Workforce Investments That Work

Today, the Biden-Harris Administration is releasing a playbook identifying evidence-based workforce development strategies that state and local governments—leveraging support from the American Rescue Plan—are using to strengthen their workforces, grow their economies, and address barriers for underserved workers. As President Biden’s historic Investing in America agenda creates millions of good-paying jobs in communities across the nation, the Administration is urging state and local governments to invest in three proven workforce strategies—registered apprenticeships, community college programs, and supportive services—to build a diverse, skilled workforce ready to meet these demands.

President Biden’s American Rescue Plan made historic investments in American communities, including through the \$350 billion State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. SLFRF funds are being used in a wide variety of ways to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, including to support and expand the workforce. In July 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration [announced](#) that recipients were investing over \$40 billion in American Rescue Plan funds—including at least \$9 billion in commitments from the SLFRF program—to support American workers to recover even stronger than before the pandemic by helping them develop in-demand skills. Since then, SLFRF commitments for workforce investments have grown to [more than \\$11 billion](#).

These workforce investments are succeeding, giving workers—including women, workers of color, rural workers, and other underserved workers—access to good jobs, including union jobs, in infrastructure, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing, many of which do not require a four-year college degree. Today, the Administration is encouraging even more state and local governments across the country to replicate these evidence-based approaches as they make workforce investments, including in cases where governments are able to further draw on remaining SLFRF dollars.

This playbook is a guide to replicating these high-quality investments—expanding registered apprenticeship programs, investing in community colleges, and providing supportive services—with case studies drawn from successful state and local models across the country supported with American Rescue Plan funds. These approaches, which align with the Biden-Harris Administration’s [Good Jobs Principles](#), will grow our economy in the way President Biden believes it grows best—from the bottom up and middle out, not the top down.

Registered Apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships are industry-driven, high-quality career pathways through which workers earn portable, nationally recognized credentials. Registered apprenticeships enable workers to “earn while they learn,” developing skills they’ll use throughout their careers, all while earning wages that progressively increase as their work experience grows. Each registered

apprenticeship is approved by the U.S. Department of Labor or state apprenticeship agency, as well as by the relevant industry, ensuring that every program provides a high-quality opportunity for workers to grow in-demand skills and advance their careers. Registered apprenticeship programs directly generate good job opportunities; [90 percent](#) of apprentices who complete a Registered Apprenticeship gain employment, with an average annual starting salary of [\\$80,000](#). Registered apprenticeships exist in a large and growing number of industries, from advanced manufacturing to transportation, healthcare, and cybersecurity.

For additional information on creating and expanding registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, see the Department of Labor’s [Apprenticeship.gov](#) and the Department of Education’s [memo on using Perkins V funds to support registered apprenticeship](#).

Using funding from President Biden’s American Rescue Plan, state and local governments have invested in expanding registered apprenticeship offerings. Three examples are outlined below.

Harris County, Texas Apprenticeship Advantage Initiative

Harris County is investing \$10.9 million from the American Rescue Plan to support its Apprenticeship Advantage Initiative, which is placing more than 1,000 low-income residents into union apprenticeships and technology training programs. The program is [designed](#) to create on-the-job training opportunities in high-wage, in-demand sectors for groups [who are often underrepresented in good jobs](#), including opportunity youth, women, workers of color, and those without four-year college degrees.

In partnership with the Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation (AFL-CIO), eight trades apprenticeships are expanding capacity, creating a critical pipeline of welders, pipefitters, plumbers, and other skilled construction workers for the region. Pre-apprenticeship programs will also take on additional students, working closely with high school guidance counselors to help identify youth for whom construction trades may be a fit. The County and Labor Federation have also created two new apprenticeships—one in low-emission vehicle repair and another in the sports, arts, and entertainment. The County is also partnering with Npower, an organization focused on building digital skills, to [expand](#) a registered apprenticeship program and help County residents enter tech and cybersecurity careers. The partnership between Harris County and NPower launched in February and aims to train 175 people over the next two years.

Harris County produced an [equity framework](#) to guide its workforce investments. As part of this strategy, the county took a data-driven approach to identifying past inequities in access to good jobs and collaborated with community representatives of groups most impacted by the pandemic in designing and implementing programs. The County’s efforts also emphasize supportive services, which help participants remain in its programs even when life challenges arise. In selecting providers for its apprenticeships, Harris County looked for vendors who could provide

pre-apprenticeship training, assistance for apprenticeship tuition costs, case management, behavioral healthcare, mentorship, and retention services.

Louisville, Kentucky KentuckianaWorks and Reentry First

The Louisville region’s workforce development board, KentuckianaWorks, operates several programs that complement one another to meet the Louisville’s workforce goals. For example, KentuckianaWorks runs the Kentuckiana Builds program in partnership with the Louisville Urban League—with training provided by the Carpenters Union and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). The program offers six-week pre-apprenticeship opportunities for Black workers, women, and other underrepresented workers in the construction trades, with direct entry into union registered apprenticeships. Using a combination of funding from the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) and discretionary state funding from the office of Governor Beshear, Kentuckiana Builds recruits mid-career workers, with an average age in the 30s, and helps them grow their skills, placing participants into jobs that pay an average of nearly \$20 per hour.

In addition, with the support of \$2.5 million in SLFRF funds from Louisville, KentuckianaWorks is evidence-based workforce development effort for individuals who were formerly incarcerated, helping them grow their career skills and providing supportive services. The new Reentry Works program, a partnership with the Center for Employment Opportunities, collaborates with local employers to increase the local labor supply and reduce recidivism. Services include transitional jobs, job readiness training, job coaching, job placement, and a year of retention support.

Maine Apprenticeship Program

Maine committed nearly [\\$11 million in SLFRF funds](#) to more than [double](#) the number of apprentices in its long-running Maine Apprenticeship Program. To expand the program, Maine competitively selected 14 organizations—ranging from school districts and community colleges to labor organizations, private employers, and others—that will expand apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in more than 50 new occupations. The initiative aims to increase equity in Maine’s apprenticeship system, reaching out to workers in rural areas, individuals with disabilities, young workers, and others. For example, to reach young people, Maine will support programs at career and technical education centers and high schools and perform outreach to out-of-school youth.

The investment is expected to add an additional 1,000 apprentices and 2,000 pre-apprentices, more than doubling Maine’s 2022 active apprentice enrollment. And not only will it expand apprenticeship to new occupations in the state, but it will add more than 140 new employer sponsors participating in registered apprenticeship in Maine. These efforts build on a program that has been successful at increasing job prospects and earnings for its participants: those who have completed registered apprenticeships in Maine have boosted their wages by [nearly 40 percent](#).

Community Colleges

Community and technical colleges are a linchpin of our nation’s education and workforce training system. Located in virtually every community across the nation, community colleges offer all Americans—regardless of their income or background—affordable opportunities to build the skills needed to obtain good jobs and support their families. Unfortunately, state support per student for postsecondary education dropped sharply in the wake of the Great Recession, and had [not fully recovered](#) in many states when the pandemic started. Yet community and technical colleges have a vital role in developing the skilled workforce needed to implement the Administration’s historic investments in high-skill, rapidly expanding sectors such as semiconductor manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, and biotechnology.

States and local governments can use federal and other funds to invest in free community college, as [New Mexico](#) has done, or free or reduced-cost job training for in-demand fields through community colleges, as [Colorado](#) has done. Or they can invest in community colleges to design curricula for high-wage, in-demand jobs and careers in partnership with local employers and unions; support dual enrollment programs to provide high-quality career pathways for high school students; and support recruitment and retention of underserved populations. In particular, state and local investments should target community college programs that confer high-quality, stackable credentials to put students and workers on a path to long-term success throughout their careers.

For additional information on supporting and expanding in-demand community college programming, see the Department of Education’s [Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges](#) and [Letter Regarding Use of American Rescue Plan Funds for Career Pathways](#).

Many state and local governments have used funding from President Biden’s American Rescue Plan to bolster their community and technical colleges to better support in-demand, high-wage careers, including the three examples outlined below:

Oklahoma Nursing Workforce Expansion Program

Oklahoma is investing more than \$80 million in SLFRF funds into its community college and university system to expand nursing education programs. Prior to the program, Oklahoma ranked 46th in the United States in nurses per capita—a challenge exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The SLFRF investment aims to produce at least 2,500 additional licensed and trained healthcare workers over the course of five years.

To achieve this, the program is supporting 26 recipient institutions to expand teaching labs and other facilities, purchase equipment, and fund scholarships and other student-related support. As the program prepares to launch in full, construction of facilities is underway, and several nursing programs are working to refine their curricula.

Through its [investments](#), Oklahoma is effectively targeting rural areas, where healthcare workforce needs are most acute. Of the 19 colleges that received funding, all but four are located in rural areas of the state.

Indiana Ivy Tech

Kokomo and Howard Counties in Indiana are investing a total of \$1.2 million in SLFRF funds in Ivy Tech Community College to build a lab to train manufacturing workers. The [Industry 4.0 Lab](#) will prepare workers for the so-called fourth Industrial Revolution, in which manufacturers use data-drive, integrated technology in highly automated production processes. The 4,000-square-foot facility includes programmable logic controllers and skill bosses to train workers in advanced manufacturing, mechatronics, automation and processing.

In addition to training adult students at the lab, Ivy Tech will instruct high school students, who will earn college credit, with a path to earning a certificate, technical certificate, or associate's degree when they finish high school. Students can also meet and network directly with local employers at the community college, smoothing their pathway into a work-based learning experience and a potential job.

Connecticut Guided Pathways

The State of Connecticut is investing \$19.5 million of SLFRF funding, leveraged in combination with other funding sources, to build up the Guided Pathways (GP) program—a [program](#) to help students in the Connecticut Community College system by expanding academic supports. The program offers a [holistic advising model](#) to students, including mentorships, coaching, and other supports, with the goal of empowering students and helping ensure their success. The state put the program into place in response to declining student enrollment, retention, and completion rates at its community colleges, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The GP program is now operating across all 12 community colleges in Connecticut and has hired nearly 110 advisors to support 35,000 students, reducing student-to-advisor ratios from 760:1 to 250:1. Advisors work with students to outline their career and academic goals, requirements and expectations for their program, course sequence, financial plan, and opportunities for employment and transfer. The state has worked to ensure that staff have the cultural competence to engage with underserved populations, including students of color, by engaging a diverse cohort of GP advisors that reflects the diversity of the student population. Notably, more than half of advising staff now identify as Black/African American or Latinx.

As a result of the program, students at Connecticut community colleges have seen increases in grade point average and retention. Students who had frequent contact with their GP advisors were more likely to persist from fall 2022 to spring 2023, and attempted and completed more credits. Numerous students have also expressed support for the program, describing the impact it had on their college experience, such as helping them navigate the community college system when they might otherwise feel lost.

Supportive Services

For too many Americans, investing in education and training is complicated by the day-to-day realities of life. Barriers such as inadequate child care, mental or behavioral health concerns, or lack of transportation can prevent individuals from enrolling in, staying in, or completing workforce education and training programs or maintaining employment. [Research shows](#) that supportive services, also called wraparound services, are key to ensuring that American students and workers—particularly those from underserved communities—can succeed in education, training, and employment, while also supporting the economy by strengthening labor force participation. [Supportive services](#) may include (but are not limited to) transportation assistance, child and dependent care, housing support, and emergency financial assistance. Services may also include training-related costs such as work clothing, tools, and application fees and other costs of apprenticeship and pre-employment training.

For additional information on providing supportive services, see the Department of Labor’s [Tools for Building an Equitable Infrastructure Workforce](#).

Three case studies show how state and local governments are using SLFRF funds to support their workforces by providing robust supportive services.

Iowa Child Care Business Incentive Grant Program

Iowa is investing [\\$26.6 million](#) of its SLFRF funds in the Child Care Business Incentive Grant Program, which helps employers offer child care options as a benefit for their employees. In particular, the program is funding local infrastructure investments to build new or expand existing child care facilities and assisting employers in reserving spots at nearby independent facilities. In its grants, the state prioritized providing care for communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and communities located in child care deserts.

The SLFRF funding is supporting 22 projects, including 18 infrastructure projects and four agreements between businesses and care centers. In total, Iowa expects to create nearly 1,800 child care slots. This access to child care will improve Iowans’ ability to go to work and provide early education for their children, and employers’ ability to recruit and retain employees.

Additionally, Iowa committed nearly \$6.8 million in SLFRF funds for its Child Care Challenge Fund, which provided 33 grants to increase the supply and quality of affordable child care. The grants were focused on expanding capacity in centers with long waitlists and fund infrastructure investments for new centers, providing parents more options for child care, and increasing the number of available slots. Most of the infrastructure investments helped child care centers expand physical capacity, meet building codes, and expand hours.

Roanoke, Virginia Star City Works

The City of Roanoke, Virginia, in partnership with the Greater Roanoke Workforce Development Board, is investing [\\$3 million](#) from its SLFRF funds in supportive services for its local workforce—including child care, food assistance, and utility and mortgage assistance. The Star City Works program is particularly intended to support the needs of workers in high-growth, high-potential sectors, helping employers in these sectors fill their workforce gaps by making it easier for people to join the workforce. Star City Works ensures that workers not only have access to training, but that they have the support necessary to successfully complete this training. The program is partnering with nonprofits to provide basic needs, health and mental health services, and child care.

Phoenix, Arizona Sky Harbor International Airport Child Care Support

To respond to workforce needs at Sky Harbor International Airport, the city of Phoenix, Arizona is investing [\\$4 million](#) of SLFRF funds to provide child care scholarships for some of the airport's 20,000 employees, serving infants and children up to five years of age. The program is need-based and is intended to support families who struggle to balance employment and child care needs.

Scholarships will serve airport workers who earn less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level, including contractors, concessioners, janitorial and custodial staff, and aviation workers. The city partnered with First Things First, an Arizona nonprofit, to develop a framework for the scholarships and a child care quality improvement and rating system. Scholarships are designed to cover about 90 percent of the cost of child care and can be used at facilities that meet First Things First's quality standards—whether for in-home care or center-based providers. The project is under construction and is expected to open in early 2024, and the city expects to support up to 250 families when the program reaches full capacity.

To meet the challenges of limited child care supply, the program allows airport workers to select any facility in the surrounding Maricopa County that meets First Things First's Quality First program. After conducting assessments, the city may use funding to offer on-site child care facilities at the airport itself.