

# State Roadmap for **WORKFORCE RECOVERY**

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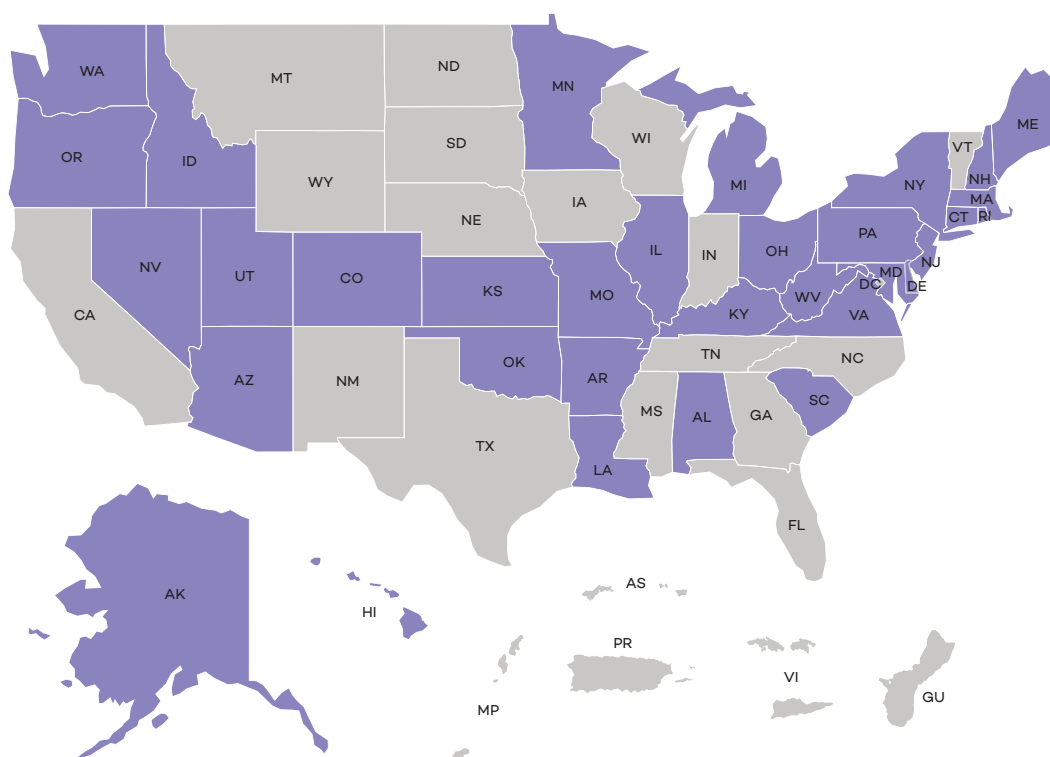
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# Introduction

**T**oday, the pace of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic remains highly uncertain and highly uneven, with certain sectors and population groups experiencing substantial hardship while others are doing well.<sup>a</sup> Businesses in pandemic-friendly sectors — like tech, ecommerce, delivery services, and telehealth — are thriving, while many businesses in sectors that rely on in-person activity have had to cut employment or shut down for good.<sup>b</sup> Workers with relatively high pre-pandemic wages and education have generally fared well, while families and communities with higher rates of unemployment and poverty before the crisis are now facing deep and enduring economic challenges.<sup>c</sup> These trends pose a substantial threat to families and to our nation's long-term economic trajectory — as growth in wages and in demand for products and services are necessary to recover and build resilience in the post-pandemic economy.

Despite the rapid evolution of today's crisis and the negative consequences resulting from COVID-19, recovery from its impacts also presents an extraordinary opportunity to close widening disparities and advance positive transformations taking place across the economy and the workforce. From the revolution of virtual services and growth in digital skill development to the redefinition of high-quality work and workplace norms in a post-COVID era, these innovations offer extraordinary promise for building a stronger workforce.

Recovery will look dramatically different for different regions, business sectors, communities, individuals and families. The end of the pandemic will not return us to our previous “normal,” nor can we expect that the road to recovery will follow a linear path forward. The timing and strength of our transition to recovery will depend on our ability to contain the virus’ spread, requiring sustained vigilance and ongoing prioritization of public health. The accessibility of vaccines, adoption of safe business practices, distribution of aid to those impacted, and stabilization of intensive-care capacity in hospitals, among other factors, will ultimately determine how quickly we recover. Observing these public health measures and building consumer confidence is essential to help millions of businesses and families to regain such tremendous losses and adapt amid ongoing uncertainty.



**FIGURE 1: More than 100 state and industry leaders from 32 states participated in *Creating an Agenda for Workforce Recovery: A Workshop Series for States*, which contributed to the development of this roadmap.**

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## THE TIMING AND STRENGTH OF OUR TRANSITION TO RECOVERY WILL DEPEND ON OUR ABILITY TO CONTAIN THE VIRUS' SPREAD, REQUIRING SUSTAINED VIGILANCE AND ONGOING PRIORITIZATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

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While states are eager to restart and recover, doing so within today's uniquely challenging context raises important questions for a state's workforce development system. How are states defining success for a new type of recovery that promotes upward mobility for families struggling with unemployment and poverty? What responsibilities does the workforce development system and its employer partners have during each phase? How can states and businesses align the call for immediate action with longer-term transformations in work and learning? And finally, how can states and industry help one another capitalize on rapid innovations developed during response to the pandemic to transform their services and operating models for good?

To help Governors and states address these questions, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) partnered with state leaders to compile a *State Roadmap for Workforce Recovery*. This resource has been crowd-sourced from multiple interviews and workshops with Governors' advisors and state leaders in workforce and economic development throughout Fall 2020, including the [Creating an Agenda for Workforce Recovery](#) workshop series (Figure 1).

The *State Roadmap for Workforce Recovery* offers a framework for organizing state workforce response and recovery activities to accomplish four critical objectives necessary for a stronger and more equitable post-pandemic future: expand access to essential support services; rapidly connect jobseekers to work; advance digital access and skill development; and enhance job quality for all (Figure 2). For each of these four objectives, the roadmap organizes state planning activities and policy strategies across three essential phases of recovery: **Respond**, **Restart**, and **Recover**. Evidence already demonstrates that states will necessarily transition between these phases at different times and may propose varying definitions of these phases in their recovery plans. For this reason, this roadmap is not intended to specify a single or linear path. Instead, it offers a framework to support an equitable recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19.



FIGURE 2: Four Objectives for a Strong and Equitable Recovery

# How to Use this Roadmap

**T**his roadmap offers Governors and state leaders a framework for addressing each of the four objectives (Figure 2) necessary to respond holistically to the unemployment crisis as well as to recover and build resilience in the post-pandemic economy.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE ROADMAP

The **strategic planning process for recovery** below (Figure 3) outlines the basic recovery framework used in each chapter and how to apply it to each of the four objectives. Each chapter contains:

- ▶ A **recovery framework**
- ▶ A menu of **policy strategies** across three phases of recovery (Respond, Restart, Recover)
- ▶ A selection of brief **state examples** and **additional resources**
- ▶ A **state case study** of how state peers are implementing this framework and policies strategies

## HOW TO USE THE ROADMAP TO ADDRESS THE FOUR OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Use the **recovery framework** in each chapter as a template for refining vision, goals, key metrics, expected outcomes, and continuous monitoring and improvement processes for addressing each of the four objectives. The framework follows the strategic planning process outlined in Figure 3.
- ▶ Consult the menu of **policy strategies** to explore opportunities for action during all three phases of the transition to recovery. This menu includes strategies implemented by peer states as well as new ideas to consider.
- ▶ Refer to the selection of brief **state examples** and **additional resources** for concrete, real-world examples of how state peers and subject matter experts are implementing elements of the recovery framework and policy strategies offered in the chapter.
- ▶ Dive deeper with the **state case study** to understand how states are connecting multiple elements of the recovery framework and policy strategies together to advance the objective in recovery.

The three phases used in the recovery framework and policy strategies — **Respond, Restart, Recover** — were identified through an assessment of existing state recovery plans. Together, these plans define each of these phases as follows:

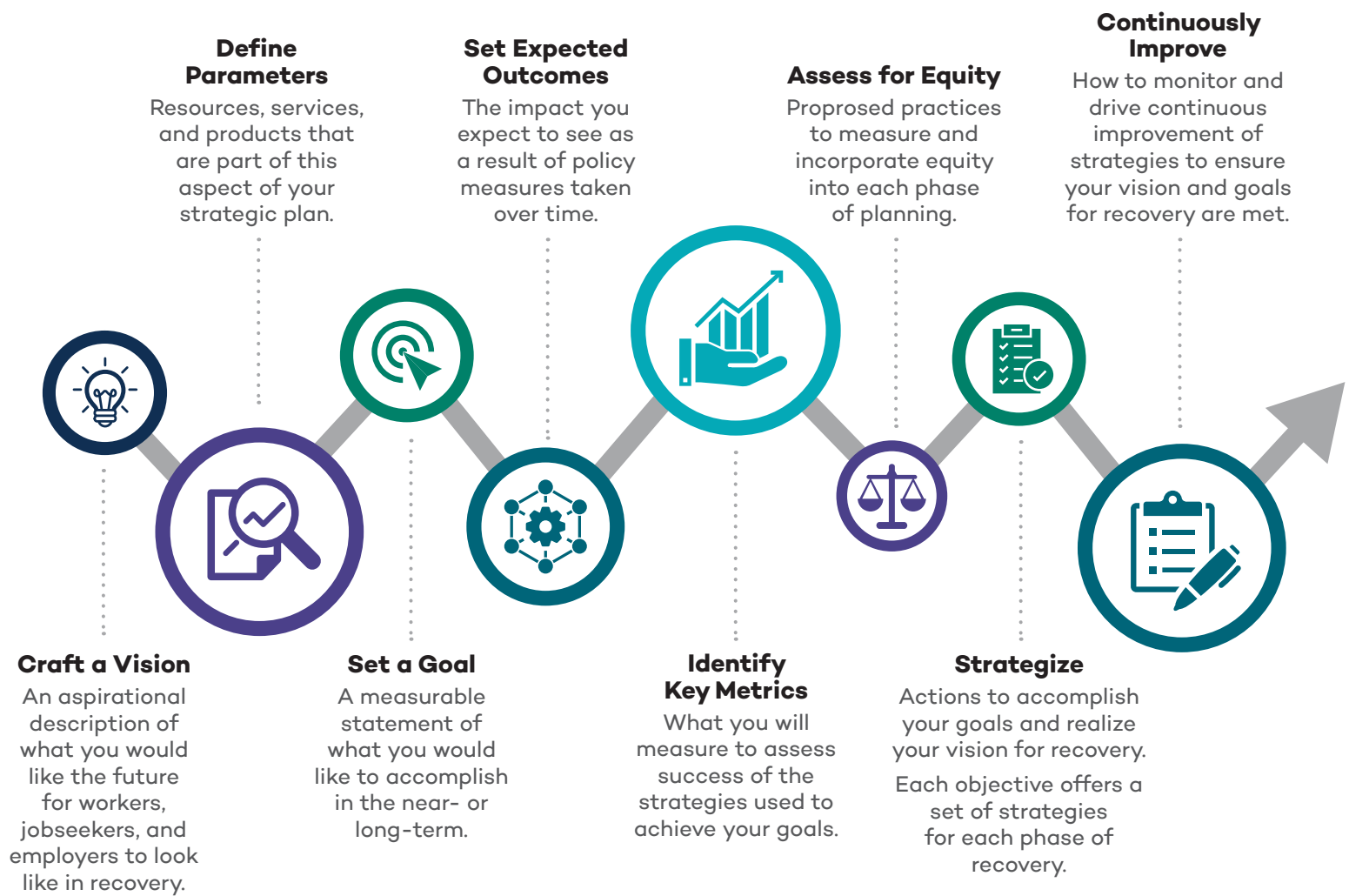
**RESPOND:** Short-term, 0-3 months from crisis onset; activities undertaken in immediate response

**RESTART:** Medium-term, 3-12 months; activities undertaken as efforts turn toward safely reopening the economy

**RECOVER:** Long-term, 12+ months; activities undertaken as business operations and public life are returning to normal

Throughout this process, state leaders should be as specific as possible in defining those in need of specific interventions, including which individuals and families have the most significant or pressing needs and how various needs may differ. For instance, access to essential services and job quality issues may play out differently for migrant workers in the agricultural sector, people with disabilities, or older workers. Meanwhile, issues around (re) connecting to work or digital skill development may require different solutions for urban and rural communities, for people formerly incarcerated, or veterans. Every community, skill and education attainment level must be considered throughout this process – from setting a vision and defining parameters to assessing for equity and evaluating progress against key metrics.

FIGURE 3: Strategic Planning Process for Recovery



**STATE LEADERS SHOULD BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE IN DEFINING THOSE IN NEED OF SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS, INCLUDING WHICH INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES HAVE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OR PRESSING NEEDS AND HOW VARIOUS NEEDS MAY DIFFER.**

# Guiding Principles of Policymaking for Recovery

**T**he *State Roadmap for Workforce Recovery* is organized around seven foundational and interconnected principles to guide policymaking for a strong and more equitable recovery.<sup>1</sup> Symbols are used throughout the roadmap to indicate which of these seven principles are emphasized in each state example.



**User-centered:** User-centered design refers to the method of building policies, programs and practices to meet the needs of direct users, including how those needs may differ across segments of the workforce and different types of learners.



**Equity-focused:** Equity-driven system design means examining the institutional structures—mission, strategic plans, policies, procedures, cultural practices—and barriers to participation that contribute to inequitable outcomes across age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography, economic status, educational attainment, immigration status, industry sector and worker classification.



**Data-driven:** Data-driven policy means identifying and collecting various types of evidence and metrics to guide strategic decision-making to align goals, objectives and initiatives toward a shared vision for recovery.



**Collaborative:** Well-organized collaboration during recovery planning and implementation, with an appointed coordination and oversight body, ensures governmental and non-governmental stakeholders develop a shared agenda, measurement system and mutually reinforcing activities that reduce duplication.



**Accountable:** Accountable policies and programs are those that are evaluated using shared metrics for recovery, often established by developing a shared framework for state and local practices that may be used to reward highest performers or shift toward more effective practices.



**Innovative:** Innovative design in recovery refers to developing and testing new processes, tools, and practices and modernizing systems that serve individuals and families across the workforce development system.



**Sustainable:** To effectively sustain and build on innovative efforts developed during response and recovery, states, employers and community partners must build the infrastructure for ongoing partnership and for continuous monitoring and improvement.





# EXPAND ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## Recovery Framework



	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
<b>Craft a Vision</b>	The state, in partnership with community providers and employers, will provide life-transforming supports and services to develop and retain a skilled workforce ready and able to participate in the economy.		
<b>Define Parameters</b>	Also commonly known as “wraparound services,” these services refer to programs that support people experiencing unemployment, severe reductions in income, and poverty. Services may include unemployment, healthcare, nutrition, housing, or cash assistance; reemployment services; childcare; transportation; and more, and may be provided through public and nonprofit entities as well as through industry partnerships.		
<b>Set a Goal</b>	Un- and underemployed individuals have access to essential supports and services to meet their basic needs. <sup>2</sup>	Un- and underemployed individuals have access to essential support services to participate in training and education or to re-enter the labor market.	Un- and underemployed individuals have access to resources to succeed in a career pathway via coordinated service delivery that engages industry, workers and community providers.
<b>Set Expected Outcomes</b>	Increased personal financial security and increased access to essential resources and supports	Reduced emergency program participation and housing eviction rates; increased job placement and retention, particularly in high-demand fields	Increased job placement and retention in high-demand fields; improved wage and employment outcomes; increased economic mobility; reduced demand for emergency programs
<b>Identify Key Metrics</b>	Business closure/opening rate; applications for TANF, SNAP, UI, WIC, emergency housing; eviction rates; food pantry visitation	Labor market participation; AJC service participation; continue tracking “Respond” phase metrics	Program processing rates; continue tracking “Respond” and “Restart” phase metrics
<b>Assess for Equity</b>	Collect data on barriers preventing equal access to programs and resources and track relevant outcomes.	Encourage all departments and community providers to conduct a formal equity analysis to determine service gaps. <sup>3</sup>	Using data on service gaps, set unique goals for access and adoption of essential support services across sub-populations. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Continuously Improve</b>	Ensure new programs — both temporary and permanent — are effectively delivered and are faithful to the intended vision by establishing quality standards to govern program implementation and aligning these standards throughout relevant unified state plans (e.g. WIOA, TANF, SNAP E&T).		

## Policy Strategies



	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
Goal	Un- and underemployed individuals have access to essential supports and services to meet their basic needs.	Un- and underemployed individuals have access to essential support services to participate in training and education or to re-enter the labor market.	Un- and underemployed individuals have access to resources to succeed in a career pathway via coordinated service delivery that engages industry, workers and community providers.
Policy Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Strengthen short-term capacity to respond to surges in demand for UI and other benefits.</li> <li>✓ Streamline service delivery by cross-training frontline staff on services available through other programs.</li> <li>✓ Launch a public information campaign to increase awareness of services and to help businesses connect employees with services.</li> <li>✓ Establish data sharing and access agreements to connect new customers with other relevant supports.</li> <li>✓ Craft messaging about services to encourage empathy and reduce stigma around accessing services.</li> <li>✓ Utilize federal flexibilities to expand access to public assistance programs such as SNAP and TANF by waiving work search or re-certification requirements.</li> <li>✓ Expand childcare options, especially for essential workers, by exploring flexibility in eligibility for public funds.</li> <li>✓ Coordinate across agencies on targeted interventions for families at risk of falling into poverty and help them navigate benefit cliffs.</li> <li>✓ Promote housing stability via emergency assistance and eviction prevention measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consider extending or supplementing unemployment assistance, nonrecurrent short-term benefits and other benefits that support workers.</li> <li>✓ Build on data sharing and access agreements that support a common case management and outcome-tracking system between federal, state and local agencies.</li> <li>✓ Accelerate digital transformation in service delivery including maximizing online and phone application and case management capabilities to expand access.</li> <li>✓ Support parents, especially women, transitioning back to work by expanding capacity of and access to education and childcare providers.</li> <li>✓ Maintain robust public information-sharing about available services, including changes in availability of in-person or virtual services.</li> <li>✓ Engage employers in the delivery of wrap-around supports, such as through resource navigators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Launch a sustained public information campaign and marketing strategy to ensure all are aware of services and to de-stigmatize use of services.</li> <li>✓ Develop a multi-generation approach to transition from serving individuals to serving families at the state and local levels.</li> <li>✓ Improve client ease of use by developing a single portal platform for accessing public benefit programs that can support integrated service delivery.</li> <li>✓ Invest in UI system modernization to prepare to respond rapidly to future surges in demand.</li> <li>✓ Facilitate coordination between employers and local support service providers as part of regional sector partnerships.</li> <li>✓ Consider statewide or multi-state procurement strategies to reduce service cost and improve local service delivery.</li> <li>✓ Leverage graduated benefit phase outs, earned income disregards and transitional services to reward work and limit the cliff effect.</li> </ul>

## Emerging Best Practices for Recovery





**Colorado** – The [Employment Support Job Retention Services](#) provides up to \$400 per person for unemployed or underemployed job seekers with financial need who are actively involved in employment preparation, job training, job search, or job retention activities and helps them access support services including childcare.  






**Missouri** – The Office of the Governor has led a cross-government data initiative that has resulted in a series of [social impact dashboards](#) that indicate the use of social services over time across each county. Since April, state agency leaders have developed ‘microcells’ or working groups that meet weekly to address geographic-, population- or industry-specific challenges identified through this dashboard. Through these groups, the state has been able to align state policy objectives and target resources toward urgent unmet needs including gaps in available childcare and shortages in the health care workforce.  





**New Jersey** – The New Jersey Office of Innovation, in partnership with Rutgers University’s John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, launched [NJ Careers](#), a digital coaching service that provides day to day job search strategy and in-platform practice of job search techniques, while also connecting job seekers with support services including health insurance, childcare, housing assistance, transportation, food assistance, and mental health care. To promote participation, the state launched an outreach campaign in partnership with community organizations, faith-based communities, and local governments.  



**Utah** – The state released five volumes of the [Utah Leads Together Plan](#) and holds daily press conferences in multiple languages to communicate critical data and state response efforts to the public. To expand access to essential services, the state has improved digital interfaces to make them accessible via multiple devices and launched a public information campaign to help families find childcare. The state is also partnering with nonprofit organizations to ensure that multicultural communities have awareness and access to critical support programs.   



**Vermont** – Governor Phil Scott created a [fund](#) to provide childcare for essential workers and ensure childcare providers can pay their bills—including employee wages, rent and utilities—during the pandemic. Using a combination of state and federal funding, the fund the revenue childcare providers normally receive from families and publicly-funded childcare subsidies. This dedicated childcare stabilization fund ensures that when the economy reopens, parents will have the childcare they relied on before the pandemic. Launched in April 2020, the program covers 50 percent of a family’s weekly tuition or subsidy copayment and continues to pay childcare subsidies.  

## Additional Resources

- ▶ NGA (Aug. 2020): [Unemployment Insurance During COVID-19](#)
- ▶ NGA (July 2020): [State Human Services Actions & Initiatives For COVID-19](#)
- ▶ NGA (Oct. 2020): [Childcare for School-Aged Children](#)
- ▶ City of Denver (Oct. 2020): [COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan](#) (including equity assessment template)
- ▶ Council of State Governments (2020): [COVID-19 and Impacts on Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- ▶ John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (April 2020): [Suddenly Virtual: Delivering Workforce Services in the COVID-19 Environment](#)
- ▶ State of Oregon (2020): [Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery](#)



## Rhode Island Case Study: Expanding Access to Essential Services

In response to the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo launched [Back to Work RI](#), an innovative job training and placement program designed for Rhode Islanders whose employment was impacted by the pandemic. Building on the state's [Real Jobs RI](#) initiative, Back to Work RI takes a demand-driven approach to workforce development by partnering directly with employers to ensure that jobseekers are prepared with the skills needed to secure well-paying jobs in growing industries. The goal of Back to Work RI is for Rhode Island's economy to come back from the pandemic even more equitable and more resilient than before.

Central to Back to Work RI is ensuring that every Rhode Islander is able to access these opportunities by removing common barriers to participation. In early 2020, the [Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner](#) (RIOPC) launched [Rhode Island Reconnect](#) (RI Reconnect) to connect participants with educational navigators who help them set goals and guide them through the process of returning to school or job training. When COVID-19 led to significant increases in unemployment, the [Governor's Workforce Board](#), which sits within the [Department of Labor and Training](#) (DLT), identified RI Reconnect as a promising model to build upon to help connect people with the resources and support they need to succeed in training they need to reenter the labor market as part of Back to Work RI.

Using federal CARES Act funds, the Governor's Workforce Board, in coordination with RIOPC leveraged and hired four additional navigators to provide services to participants in Back to Work RI. Through needs assessments, the state identified lack of access to technology and limited digital skills, housing insecurity, lack of transportation and poverty more broadly as significant barriers to persistence in training programs and working. RIOPC navigators are equipped to be flexible and creative in eliminating these barriers to promote more equitable outcomes in Back to Work RI.

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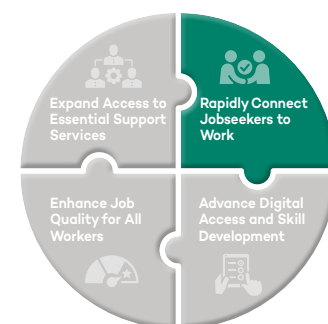
### THROUGH NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, THE STATE IDENTIFIED LACK OF ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND LIMITED DIGITAL SKILLS, HOUSING INSECURITY, LACK OF TRANSPORTATION AND POVERTY MORE BROADLY AS SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO PERSISTENCE IN TRAINING PROGRAMS AND WORKING.

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Individuals in Back to Work RI training and placement programs receive outreach from an RIOPC Navigator who assesses their needs and connects them with wrap-around supports. Navigators work with the [United Way of RI](#) and leverage federal CARES Act funds to help participants cover critical expenses like childcare or rent. Navigators can also make referrals to mental health professionals, substance abuse support and telehealth services if necessary. The goal of this strategy is to connect each individual with the unique resources they need to succeed in training and work by creating a no-wrong-door approach to service-delivery.

To measure impact, DLT has implemented "Back to Work Stat", which it developed with Johns Hopkins University's [GovEX](#) program. While funded currently by CARES dollars, the Back to Work RI model has demonstrated how the state can facilitate partnerships and build on existing networks to focus resources through the lens of demand. This model's strength, stemming from its administrative platform Real Jobs RI, is that its flexibility allows it to scale while retaining authentic connection to the talent demands of regional employers.

# RAPIDLY CONNECT JOBSEEKERS TO WORK



## Recovery Framework

	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
<b>Craft a Vision</b>	All jobseekers have access to effective and efficient employment and job search services, upskilling, reskilling and credentialing opportunities that lead to employment, financial independence and desired quality career pathways.		
<b>Define Parameters</b>	Services that are most often used to connect dislocated workers to work include individualized career counseling, job search assistance, short-term training and credentialing opportunities, and local labor market guidance to inform workers of possible career pathways.		
<b>Set a Goal</b>	Jobseekers have access to the short-term job training and services necessary to rapidly transition to available jobs, including essential occupations. <sup>5</sup>	Jobseekers have access to employment services and to training that leads to an industry-recognized credential or other skill attainment required to reenter the workforce.	Jobseekers have access to career pathways with opportunities for applied learning, credential attainment, career coaching, professional networking and supportive services.
<b>Set Expected Outcomes</b>	Mitigated job loss among adult workers; open jobs rapidly filled, particularly in essential occupations	Increased job placement and retention; decreased UI claims; increased credential attainment	Decreased unemployment and underemployment; increased credential attainment; improved economic outcomes for dislocated workers
<b>Identify Key Metrics</b>	UI claims; unemployment (U-1, U-2, U-3) and underemployment (U-4, U-5, U-6) <sup>6</sup> ; job openings and hiring; AJC service participation; job placement; layoffs	Job placement; credential attainment; AJC exits (youth and adult); continue tracking “Respond” phase metrics	Labor force participation; earnings; job openings and hiring; credential attainment; new business formation; continue tracking “Respond” and “Restart” phase metrics
<b>Assess for Equity</b>	Evaluate unemployment and underemployment data to identify gaps in reemployment services across sub-populations. <sup>7</sup>	Collect and evaluate employer-provided data to measure quality of job placement for dislocated workers across sub-populations.	Develop an index to measure longer-term sub-population risks and propensities for factors such as wage growth and potential for displacement. <sup>8</sup>
<b>Continuously Improve</b>	Work jointly with employers and industry partners to develop a standardized outcome reporting (e.g., report cards, data dashboards) so state and local leaders can measure success toward connecting jobseekers to quality work and growing local talent pipelines necessary for business recovery.		



## Policy Strategies

	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
Goal	Jobseekers have access to the short-term job training and services necessary to rapidly transition to available jobs, including essential occupations.	Jobseekers have access to employment services and to training that leads to an industry-recognized credential or other skill attainment required to reenter the workforce.	Jobseekers have access to career pathways with opportunities for applied learning, credential attainment, career coaching, professional networking and supportive services.
Policy Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Create a statewide rapid re-employment plan with leadership in the Governor's office, state and local workforce boards, higher education and industry partners.</li> <li>✓ Establish data sharing and access agreements to connect eligible UI claimants to job-matching services and training.</li> <li>✓ Leverage short-time compensation programs to prevent loss of employment and benefits.</li> <li>✓ Leverage Dislocated Worker Grants to support short-term training, including rapid reskilling for essential occupations.</li> <li>✓ Expand American Job Center virtual service delivery.</li> <li>✓ Promote flexibility in occupational licensing requirements to maintain and expand talent pipelines, especially for essential workers.</li> <li>✓ Distribute information about in-demand, quality jobs and available training programs.</li> <li>✓ Expand access to affordable, online learning that leads to industry-recognized credentials or attainment of other in-demand skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Promote free or discounted resources available through small business centers, such as digital e-commerce tools and business consulting.</li> <li>✓ With leadership from the Workforce Development Board, help local workforce boards consider policies that expand flexibility to serve dislocated and incumbent workers.</li> <li>✓ Routinely update and optimize data sharing agreements and create reports on progress toward state and local employment goals.</li> <li>✓ Promote work-based learning, including apprenticeships, as a method of employer-validated retraining and employment.</li> <li>✓ Invest in support for racial and ethnic minority-owned businesses and entrepreneurs.</li> <li>✓ Review state definitions of "dislocated worker" to best calibrate access to training and employment services.</li> <li>✓ Create digital employment service platforms that connect jobseekers to personalized services and training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ With leadership by the state workforce board, develop the capacity of local workforce boards to build partnerships and align local employment services.</li> <li>✓ Develop an integrated data infrastructure through partnerships with training institutions and employers to track individual outcomes over time.</li> <li>✓ Engage employers in developing demand-driven training programs, including work-based learning, paid internships, and apprenticeship.</li> <li>✓ Engage employers in developing incumbent worker upskilling programs.</li> <li>✓ Invest in a quality transparent, portable, and stackable credential infrastructure.</li> <li>✓ Remove barriers to occupational licensing that limit geographic mobility or labor market entry.</li> </ul>



## Emerging Best Practices for Recovery





**California** – Since 1982, the [Employment Training Panel](#) has reimbursed employers for incumbent worker training. A [recent evaluation](#) found the program had significant positive impacts on employee wages, labor productivity, and the number of employees, especially for small- and medium-sized businesses. States could use programs such as this to help stimulate the recovery of small- and medium-sized firms and improve access to economic opportunities for workers.  





**Connecticut** – The Governor's Workforce Council expanded access to Metrix Learning licenses and purchased license to [180Skills](#) for those receiving unemployment insurance through [SkillUpCT](#). These platforms allow eligible residents to enroll in short-term training tracks that lead to more than 100 industry certifications. In 2020, the state utilized federal CARES Act funding to provide free training for displaced people seeking quality job opening with in-demand industries, including supportive services, individualized job coaching and short-term credential attainment through aligned education and training providers.   






**Indiana** – [Indiana's Next Level Jobs](#) program consists of the Workforce Ready Training Grant, which award students and employers funding to participate in or provide free short-term training in high-paying, in-demand industries. The [Rapid Recovery for a Better Future](#) initiative temporarily expands Next Level Jobs using \$75 million of federal CARES Act funds. The expansion enables the Workforce Ready Grant to increase financial support for students up to \$10,000, expand program eligibility and allow two- and four-year degree holders to participate. The expansion enables the Employer Training Grant to increase the amount eligible for reimbursement up to \$100,000 per employer and dedicates at least \$5 million to minority-, veteran-, and women-owned businesses.  



**Louisiana** – The Louisiana Workforce Commission hosts [drive-thru job fairs](#) to reach those without internet access in a safe, physically distanced environment. Employers sponsor different locations where participants can gather information about current openings or even be interviewed on the spot.  



**Tennessee** – The [Tennessee Talent Exchange](#) is a partnership between Hospitality TN, Tennessee Retail and the Tennessee Grocers and Convenience Association. The exchange helps place workers displaced from the hospitality industry as a result of COVID-19 into positions in grocery, retail and logistics industries through an online platform called [Jobs4TN](#).   

## Additional Resources

- ▶ NGA (June 2020): [State Strategies to Transition Dislocated and Incumbent Workers into High-Demand Industries](#)
- ▶ NGA (July 2020): [State Strategies to Leverage RESEA in Response to COVID-19](#)
- ▶ NGA (July 2018): [Aligning State Systems for a Talent Driven Economy](#)
- ▶ Credential Engine and NGA (Nov. 2020): [Making Sense of Credentials: A State Roadmap and Action Guide for Transparency](#)
- ▶ NCSL, CSG, NGA (Dec. 2020): [Occupational Licensing: Assessing State Policies and Practices](#)
- ▶ John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (April 2020): [Suddenly Virtual: Delivering Workforce Services in the COVID-19 Environment](#)
- ▶ NASWA (May 2020): [Service Delivery: Virtual Tools for Workforce Agencies](#)
- ▶ Nexight Group (Dec. 2020): [A Guide to the American Workforce System](#)



## Ohio Case Study: Rapidly Connect Jobseekers to Work

The Ohio [Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation](#) coordinates workforce development efforts across 17 state agencies to carry out the vision of the Governor, Lt. Governor, and [Governor's Executive Workforce Board](#). This coordinated structure facilitates strong and sustainable stakeholder feedback, which helps the state quickly identify challenges in the workforce brought about by COVID-19 and maximize resources to address those challenges. For example, despite high overall unemployment rates due to the pandemic, industries like IT and healthcare are struggling to fill open positions because of skill gaps caused by an increase in demand for services and rapid changes in technology used in these industries.

The state has focused on expanding access to short-term, flexible and affordable training opportunities. Two programs integral to this strategy are [TechCred](#) and the Individual Microcredential Assistance Program. While TechCred reimburses Ohio employers for technology-focused credentials earned by employees, the Individual Microcredential Assistance Program (IMAP) reimburses approved training providers when an individual earns a technology-focused credential. These initiatives not only address workers' immediate needs for skill development and job placement into sustainable employment, but also address persisting skills gaps faced by employers in high-tech fields.

The cornerstone program of this effort has been the [Ohio to Work](#) program. This innovative, multiagency effort is led by JobsOhio (Ohio's economic development corporation), the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and Development Services Agency. Through Ohio to Work, JobsOhio invests in and implements technological enhancements in institutions that serve jobseekers, like OhioMeansJobs Centers. These investments increase staff capacity to provide one-on-one career coaching, advising and individualized assessment for jobseekers. Ohio to Work began as a pilot in Cleveland to target those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including Black and Latino communities. To measure the success of this program, JobsOhio is tracking the total number of people served, the number of people enrolled in job training programs and the number of people who are placed in jobs with employers. JobsOhio will use information collected by the pilot to scale these jobseekers services in communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

To promote continuous improvement and inform investments across their workforce system, the Office is also using the [Workforce Success Measures Dashboard](#) in 2017 to measure the success of workforce programs across the state. This tool features data that allows policymakers to assess how well programs help participants find employment, develop skills, enhance wages and provide value to business. In 2021, this resource will be enhanced to provide more granular and actionable information in a user-friendly interface so dislocated workers can make more informed decisions and quickly reconnect to the labor market in a high-quality job.

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**TO PROMOTE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND INFORM INVESTMENTS ACROSS THEIR WORKFORCE SYSTEM, THE OFFICE DEVELOPED A WORKFORCE SUCCESS MEASURES DASHBOARD IN 2017 TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF WORKFORCE PROGRAMS ACROSS THE STATE.**

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# ADVANCE DIGITAL ACCESS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT



## Recovery Framework

	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
<b>Craft a Vision</b>	All workers, learners and communities have access to internet connectivity, technology and have the relevant skills to participate in our society, democracy and economy. <sup>d</sup>		
<b>Define Parameters</b>	Advancing digital access and skill development ensures all residents have access to reliable, affordable and secure internet connections, digital devices, foundational digital skills and those required for specific in-demand occupations.		
<b>Set a Goal</b>	Workers and learners have access to the connectivity, hardware and support needed to successfully adjust to remote work, learning and support services.	Workers and learners have sustainable access to connectivity and hardware to work and learn, and increasingly develop foundational and occupational digital skills.	Workers and learners are connected to training programs and resources that support their success in moving into in-demand career pathways.
<b>Set Expected Outcomes</b>	Increased access to virtual services, remote work and remote learning	Increased participation in foundational digital literacy training and occupational digital skills training; increased job placement and retention in high-tech fields; more equitable participation in remote work and learning when necessary and available	Increased connectivity; increased % individuals on career paths in in-demand fields and in jobs with lower risk of automation; increased business productivity
<b>Identify Key Metrics<sup>e</sup></b>	Household internet speeds and adoption rates; monthly cost of connectivity; device ownership; % people with basic digital skills	Participation in high-tech training programs; projected skill gaps; continue tracking "Respond" phase metrics	% of workers without a college degree that receive employer-sponsored training; continue tracking "Respond" and "Restart" phase metrics
<b>Assess for Equity</b>	Analyze connectivity and device access, affordability and adoption data, as well as percentage of adults without basic digital skills by sub-population to target interventions. <sup>g</sup>	In partnership with employers and library professionals, launch a digital inclusion, access and skills survey to assess skillsets across sub-populations.	In partnership with industry, develop an index to measure sub-population risks for displacement due to digital skill gaps.
<b>Continuously Improve</b>	Encourage bodies such as the state and local workforce development boards to incorporate the key metrics above into their workforce development plans and, using employer feedback, continuously assess progress toward baseline metrics to identify areas for improvement.		

## Policy Strategies

	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
Goal	Workers and learners have access to the connectivity, hardware and support needed to successfully adjust to remote work, learning and support services.	Workers and learners have sustainable access to connectivity and hardware to work and learn, and increasingly develop foundational and occupational digital skills.	Workers and learners are connected to training programs and resources that support their success in moving into in-demand career pathways.
Policy Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collect data on current household accessibility, affordability and adoption of digital resources.</li> <li>✓ Rapidly expand connectivity via temporary or mobile hotspots and make public spaces with secure broadband easily accessible.</li> <li>✓ Ensure all virtual service delivery is accessible via mobile device.</li> <li>✓ Ensure all state digital platforms have features necessary to be accessible by people with disabilities.</li> <li>✓ Partner with training providers to offer low- or no-cost digital skills training for those with limited digital literacy.</li> <li>✓ Invest in training for public frontline workers to ensure they have the skills they need to serve their remote clients.</li> <li>✓ Leverage emergency federal, philanthropic or industry support to subsidize connectivity and provide devices for those in need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Assess available data on the state's skills gaps and identify areas where insufficient digital literacy or technological skills are contributing to those gaps.</li> <li>✓ Subsidize connectivity for low-income households via federal grants, philanthropic investments or public-private partnerships.</li> <li>✓ Create clear and consistent definitions for foundational and occupational digital literacy across education and workforce systems.</li> <li>✓ Encourage the use of existing workforce and adult education funds for digital skill-building, such as by making foundational digital skills a core element of WIOA-supported training programs.</li> <li>✓ Provide skill-building opportunities for educators to ensure their ability to teach emerging technological skills.</li> <li>✓ Communicate the importance of digital access to policymakers, investors and philanthropic organizations to secure investments in infrastructure.</li> <li>✓ Establish incentives or direct support for employers to train their current workers with digital skills needed for the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop a statewide vision, strategic plan and definitions of digital inclusion and foundational and occupational digital literacy.</li> <li>✓ Develop, and invest in a scalable, low-cost assessment to gather data on digital access and skills across the state.</li> <li>✓ Invest in infrastructure to ensure broadband is accessible and affordable for all.</li> <li>✓ Incentivize regional partnerships to build and strengthen talent pipelines for high-demand, high-tech industries.</li> <li>✓ Prioritize equitable digital skill development by directing investments to programs serving communities of color and those traditionally underserved communities.</li> <li>✓ Promote skills- and competency-based teaching and learning models.</li> <li>✓ Build the capacity of state and local workforce development boards to adequately represent and meet the evolving needs of industry.</li> <li>✓ Integrate advanced technologies into K-12 and higher education teaching and learning.</li> </ul>

## Emerging Best Practices for Recovery



**Arizona** – A team of librarians from five different libraries, with support from the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records launched a collaborative initiative, [AZ LibTAP](#), to provide one-on-one tech support services over the phone. This approach is modeled after the National Digital Inclusion Alliance's [Digital Navigators](#) model, whereby navigators are equipped to address the whole digital inclusion process — home connectivity, access to devices, and digital skills — through one-on-one support and repeated interactions if needed. 🧑🏫 🔄



**Arkansas** – The Arkansas Economic Development Corporation is [leveraging](#) federal CARES Act funds to provide grants to companies to expand broadband to under-connected communities. To build long-term capacity for digital access, Governor Asa Hutchinson has coupled this outreach with [investments](#) in technological skill development across the education and workforce system, including the establishment of the [Arkansas Center for Data Sciences](#). ⚖️ 🧑🏫 🔄



**Illinois** – In September 2019 Governor J.B. Pritzker established the [Office of Broadband](#), housed within the [Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity](#) (DCEO), to oversee the Connect Illinois initiative and to develop and administer programming in the areas of digital literacy, adoption, and inclusion. The initiative includes a \$400 million grant matching program to help communities expand broadband infrastructure with matching investments from federal grants, local municipalities, employers, or philanthropies. The grant program and related policy is guided by an advisory council with representatives from healthcare, education and business. ⚖️ 🧑🏫



**Maine** – The [Maine Digital Inclusion Initiative](#) is a partnership between the [National Digital Equity Center](#), University of Maine System and the Maine State Library and aims to expand digital literacy services to traditionally underserved populations and to provide employment-related education and technology training to older adults. The [Maine Office of Adult Education](#) uses [Northstar Digital Literacy](#) assessments to evaluate participants' technological skills before and after participation in training programs. 📚 📈 🧑🏫



**South Carolina** – [BePro, BeProud](#) promotes opportunities to enter the skilled trades with minimal training and learn new technological skills on the go. The mobile Workforce Workshop, housed in a semi-truck, features hands-on experience with skilled professions while using virtual reality technology to demonstrate the jobs to a live audience at career fairs and educational facilities. This initiative operates via a public-private collaboration between the Associated Industries of South Carolina Foundation and the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce. The [BePro, BeProud](#) model was first implemented in Arkansas in association with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce. 🧑🏫 🧑🏫 🔄

## Additional Resources

- ▶ NGA (Nov. 2020): [Governors Strategies to Expand Affordable Broadband Access](#)
- ▶ NGA (July 2020): [Reimagining Workforce Policy in the Age of Disruption: A State Guide for Preparing the Future Workforce Now](#) and [accompanying interactive microsite](#)
- ▶ Digital US (June 2020): [Building a Digitally Resilient Workforce: Creating On-Ramps to Opportunity](#)
- ▶ National Skills Coalition (Dec. 2020): [Boosting Digital Literacy in the Workplace](#)
- ▶ National Skills Coalition: [Digital Skills in Pandemic Times: How State Policymakers Can Help Workers and Businesses Adapt in a Changing Economy](#)



## Hawai'i Case Study: Advance Digital Access and Skill Development

**T**he economic impacts of COVID-19 have been especially harsh in Hawai'i, given the state's reliance on the hospitality industry — leaving a large sector of the population out of work. The state identified geographic isolation and fragmentation as distinct barriers to helping jobseekers, workers and employers to connect with one another and access available employment — a barrier made more significant by the transition to remote work. In response, Governor David Ige directed the [Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism](#) (DBEDT), and the [Hawai'i Workforce Development Council](#) (WDC) to launch the Hawai'i Broadband Initiative to develop and advance a cohesive vision for digital inclusion and workforce resiliency across the Aloha State.

In October, the state released the [Hawai'i Broadband Strategic Plan 2020](#) and the [2020 Workforce Resiliency Initiative Plan](#). Together, these resources lay out a vision for Hawai'i to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 by expanding access to broadband connectivity and by retraining and upskilling workers with the skills in greatest demand. In December, the state built upon these plans by publishing a comprehensive [Digital Equity Declaration](#) authored by a community stakeholder group, the Broadband Hui. This declaration includes vision, direction, multiple targets, and benchmarks toward Hawai'i's equitable and accessible digital future.

The [Hawai'i Broadband Strategic Plan 2020](#) outlines four long-term goals related to expanding broadband access throughout the state:

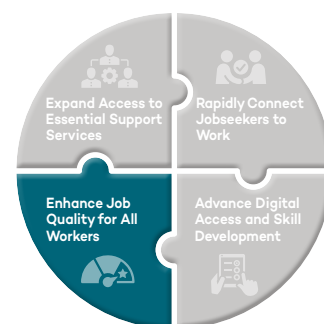
- Ensure Robust Broadband Infrastructure to All Hawai'i Residents
- Expand Digital Inclusion and Adoption to Achieve Digital Equity
- Enable Hawai'i to Thrive through a Digital Economy
- Strengthen Community Resiliency through Broadband

These goals emphasize not only the need for investment in infrastructure to expand the availability of broadband but also the need to address barriers to connectivity including cost, quality, access to devices, and lack of digital skills. To help drive further access to connectivity, the Hawai'i Broadband Initiative also launched a [COVID-19 Resources](#) hub highlighting local initiatives to expand broadband access and adoption. Featured resources and projects include a program that provides free internet for students, special offers for essential workers and a free hotspot locator.

Throughout 2019, the WDC conducted interviews and focus groups with nearly 200 workforce board members, employers, and other private and public sector stakeholders to gather data on anticipated skill gaps. From this outreach, the WDC developed a goal to prepare Hawai'i's workforce with the digital skills and resources needed to thrive in the 21st century work environment. The plan intends to upskill 200,000 people (approximately 30 percent of the total workforce) with basic digital literacy skills, problem-solving and other soft skills, and access to more advanced online training courses by 2022. To achieve this goal, the [2020 Workforce Resiliency Initiative Plan](#) created a baseline training infrastructure, established statewide objectives for digital skill curriculum and a new, centralized repository of resources and information for digital training using WIOA funds. The state also launched new partnerships with local libraries, community colleges and credentialing platforms including Coursera, Microsoft Skilling Initiative, LinkedIn Learning and Amazon Web Services. The WDC plans to seek additional funding from private and public organizations over the next three years to sustain this effort.

In response to COVID-19, DBEDT has also established a new [program](#) for dislocated workers to participate in remote work-based learning with companies participating in the Aloha+Challenge, a network of companies committed to the state's sustainability goals. With support from federal CARES Act funding, DBEDT partnered with Kupu, a conservation and youth education nonprofit, and the Economic Development Alliance of Hawai'i to serve more than 450 participants.

# ENHANCE JOB QUALITY FOR ALL WORKERS



## Recovery Framework

	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
<b>Craft a Vision</b>	To promote safety, respect and value in the workplace; provide workers the opportunity to achieve financial security, participate in their regional economy and reach their potential; and support the ability of businesses to attract and retain top talent to compete in the national and global labor market.		
<b>Define Parameters</b>	Characteristics of quality jobs – which communities must identify in partnership with employers, jobseekers and community-based organizations – often include workplace safety, predictable working hours, wage level at or above self-sufficiency, protection from discrimination and harassment, and access to benefits that support health and wellbeing and security for the future.		
<b>Set a Goal</b>	Workers have access to a safe working environment, sufficient wages to cover basic needs, the skills and opportunities to participate in work.	Workers have access to stable work, wages at or above self-sufficiency, and essential benefits that support business regeneration and improve community health.	Communities and employers commit to creating pathways for workers that offer quality work and promote upward mobility, community health and economic dynamism.
<b>Set Expected Outcomes</b>	Mitigation of negative impacts on workforce participation, health outcomes, earnings; reduced reliance on social services	Increased workforce participation; improved health outcomes; increased earnings; decreased reliance on social services; increased savings	Increased social mobility; improved health outcomes; increased earnings; increased productivity; increased employee retention; increased business competitiveness
<b>Identify Key Metrics</b>	Equitable workforce participation; individual earnings; liquid asset poverty index; access to paid leave; access to healthcare	Rate of individuals working multiple jobs; access to affordable benefits; continue tracking “Respond” metrics	Employee satisfaction; social mobility (tax records); <sup>10</sup> income distribution (e.g. GINI coefficient); continue tracking “Respond” and “Restart” metrics
<b>Assess for Equity</b>	Measure job quality for frontline workers in essential sectors by tracking retention, wage, and access to employer-sponsored benefits and other job quality indicators.	Help employers generate data about their social impact, including diversity and inclusion in hiring and promotion rates.	Create an accountability dashboard to measure employment and job quality disparities faced by various sub-populations. <sup>11</sup>
<b>Continuously Improve</b>	Establish or appoint an existing workgroup with representation from business, labor, training providers and community organizations – such as a subcommittee of the state workforce development board – to lead the development of minimum work standards and quality job characteristics for each sector and to incorporate job quality goals into state workforce and economic development strategies.		





## Policy Strategies

	RESPOND	RESTART	RECOVER
Goal	Workers have access to a safe working environment, sufficient wages to cover basic needs, and the skills and opportunities to participate in work.	Workers have access to stable work, wages at or above self-sufficiency, and essential benefits that support business regeneration and improve community health.	Communities and employers commit to creating pathways for workers that offer quality work and promote upward mobility, community health and economic dynamism.
Policy Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop, communicate and enforce workplace safety regulations.</li> <li>✓ Require employers to disclose pandemic-related infections and workplace safety risks.</li> <li>✓ Consider adopting new workplace safety standards to protect workers at greatest risk.</li> <li>✓ Provide emergency benefits to workers lacking paid sick or family and medical leave; consider requiring employers to provide such benefits, including to essential workers.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>✓ Expand unemployment assistance to on-demand workers and entrepreneurs, such as via self-employment assistance programs.</li> <li>✓ Incentivize hazard pay for those in high-risk occupations.</li> <li>✓ Set job quality requirements such as wage levels, benefits, and training opportunities for job placement programs.</li> <li>✓ Encourage employers to adopt skills-based hiring practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Evaluate the individual-, employer- and community-level impacts of potential local and state job quality policies such as wage increases or paid leave mandates.</li> <li>✓ Ensure that safety standard boards have the resources they need to carry out their responsibilities and broad representation from across the workforce.</li> <li>✓ Collaborate at the industry level to define and measure high-quality job features in different industry sectors.</li> <li>✓ Implement coaching models that help individuals self-define a quality job.</li> <li>✓ Facilitate opportunities for employer champions to share job-quality best-practices and the ROI with other employers.</li> <li>✓ Require transparency and independent evaluations of worker information and consider new enforcement mechanisms to accurately classify all workers.</li> <li>✓ Publicly commit to being a model employer for state employees.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>✓ Provide access to digital self-sufficiency tools to students, jobseekers and incumbent workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Based on impact evaluations, consider new policies on state or regional cost-of-living-based minimum wages, paid and medical leave, and other benefits that support labor force participation.</li> <li>✓ In partnership with state and local workforce boards, establish minimum work standards and job quality goals.</li> <li>✓ Create and scale industry sector partnerships that build pathways to quality jobs, reduce barriers to participation and incentivize employers to invest in their talent pipelines.</li> <li>✓ Consider new financing models to encourage employers to invest in training for incumbent workers.</li> <li>✓ Gather data on nonstandard work arrangements and, via the state workforce board or a dedicated task force, study options to expand access to portable benefits.</li> <li>✓ Revise state and local government procurement practices to prioritize job quality in the selection of suppliers.</li> </ul>

## Emerging Best Practices for Recovery






**Alabama** — The Office of Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, launched a first-in-nation career tool that includes a benefits cliff calculator within the state workforce development career path planner. [The Dashboard for Alabamians to Visualize Income Determinations \(DAVID\)](#) will help individuals understand which career pathways will help them achieve self-sufficiency and overcome the potential loss of public assistance based on their income, region, occupation and family dynamics.  





**California** — The [High Road Training Partnerships \(H RTP\)](#) initiative is a \$10 million demonstration project by the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) to advance both upward mobility and economic competitiveness by developing industry training partnerships with “high road” employers that offer quality jobs. The CWDB defines [a quality job](#) as one that provides family-sustaining wages, health benefits, pension programs, advancement opportunities and collective worker input and is stable, predictable, safe and free of discrimination. The H RTP [Roadmap to Job Quality](#) also articulates the role of workers, employers, worker organizations, and communities in advancing job quality.    






**Colorado** — The state has prioritized gathering data on the on-demand workforce and identifying opportunities to protect these workers. During the 2020 legislation session, the state legislature passed [SB20-207](#) requiring Office of the Future of Work to study independent contractors and unemployment insurance to inform policy recommendations that support independent contractors. Additionally, as a part of NGA's *State Collaborative Consortium to Understand and Support the On-Demand Workforce*, Colorado conducted focus groups of on-demand workers and employers, and published a [report](#) on their findings.   





**Hawai'i** — The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism set job quality criteria including wages, benefits and training opportunities for their [program](#) to place dislocated workers with companies in emerging industries using CARES Act funds.  



**Idaho** — The Idaho Workforce Development Council has implemented the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management Initiative](#) statewide. Through this initiative, employers are developing and resourcing training pathways and are encouraged to develop competency-based job descriptions based on experience rather than credentials obtained. This helps ensure workers with a wider range of educational backgrounds have access to good jobs.   



**Maine** — The Governor's Economic Recovery Committee drafted [Recommendations to Sustain and Grow Maine's Economy](#) in November 2020. One recommendation is to cultivate entrepreneurship that drive wage and quality job growth by using a \$100 million bond to fill gaps in Maine's support system for entrepreneurs who are immigrants, people of color, Native Americans, and women.  

## Additional Resources

- ▶ NGA (July–Dec. 2020): [Understanding & Supporting The On-Demand Workforce & Current Legal Protections And Opportunities For Supporting Workers](#)
- ▶ NGA (July 2020): [Reimagining Workforce Policy in the Age of Disruption: A State Guide for Preparing the Future Workforce Now](#) and [accompanying interactive microsite](#)
- ▶ American Enterprise Institute–Brookings (Sept. 2018): [Report on Paid Family and Medical Leave](#)
- ▶ Aspen Institute (June 2019): [Designing Portable Benefits: A Resource Guide for Policymakers: Job Quality Tools Library](#)
- ▶ Federal Reserve Bank of Boston: [Research Consortium on Quality Jobs](#)
- ▶ National Fund for Workforce Solutions (Aug. 2020): [Making Jobs Better: Executive Summary](#)
- ▶ Opportunity Insights: [Economic Tracker: Supporting the Recovery from COVID-19](#)



## Massachusetts Case Study: Enhance Job Quality for All Workers

In 2017, the economy was strong by many metrics, but there were still persistent inequalities in the labor market. Of primary concern for Massachusetts was that many workers were not earning a family-sustaining wage and were working in jobs with unpredictable or inconsistent schedules, leading to unstable household finances. This also bore consequences for employers struggling with employee retention, and for taxpayers who shoulder the cost of social services that low-wage workers rely on to make ends meet. In response, two [Aspen Job Quality Fellows](#) helped establish the [Reinventing Work Initiative](#) (RWI) — a collaboration between the [Federal Reserve Bank of Boston](#) (FRBB) and the [Commonwealth Corporation](#), Massachusetts’ quasi-public workforce development agency within the [Executive Office for Labor and Workforce Development](#) — to advance employer-driven job quality improvements.

The Reinventing Work Initiative defines job quality as a “bundle of characteristics beyond wage related to paid employment,” including consistency of hours, employer-provided benefits, commute, autonomy, worker voice and potential for advancement. The goal of the initiative is to create a sustainable approach to enhancing job quality by engaging employers to change how they think about their role in promoting job quality. In its first phase, the initiative convened focus groups with businesses, industry associations and local workforce boards to understand how employers think about their role in promoting job quality, especially for workers in entry-level, low-wage positions. The goal of this phase was to collect data about types of initiatives employers are most interested in implementing and barriers they face in doing so.

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### THE REINVENTING WORK INITIATIVE DEFINES JOB QUALITY AS A “BUNDLE OF CHARACTERISTICS BEYOND WAGE RELATED TO PAID EMPLOYMENT,” INCLUDING CONSISTENCY OF HOURS, EMPLOYER-PROVIDED BENEFITS, COMMUTE, AUTONOMY, WORKER VOICE AND POTENTIAL FOR ADVANCEMENT.

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The second phase was scheduled to convene communities of practice to identify business challenges and potential best practices for experimentation throughout 2020. However, with the onset of the pandemic, employers had limited capacity to engage. At the same time, the pandemic quickly underscored the urgency of this work, given the challenges faced by essential workers — many of whom are employed in low-wage jobs — and because many employers are considering permanent changes to how work is done in their organization. The Reinventing Work Initiative steering committee pivoted, launching a series of ten-minute “micro workshops” on low-cost job quality-improving practices that employers can adopt immediately. The series highlights employers with innovative practices in areas including business adaptation, work-life balance, worker safety, and operationalizing racial equity. The goal of this phase is for employers to understand how they can implement short-term improvements and for the RWI to gather information about what resources and support employers need to build upon and scale these improvements.

In the third phase of work, the initiative plans to provide financial resources and technical assistance so employers can test ideas and work toward continuous improvement. At the end of this phase, they expect to present the state with policy recommendations to incentivize more employers to rethink their role in promoting job quality and implementing quality-enhancing best practices.



## GLOSSARY

**American Job Centers (AJCs)** are a system of nearly 2,400 employment service organizations that provide an array of services to eligible job seekers and businesses to help prepare and train the workforce and offer services that help business and industry find talent. Funding is provided by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

**The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act** was signed into law on March 27, 2020. It expands states' ability to provide unemployment insurance for many workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including for workers who are not ordinarily eligible for unemployment benefits.

**Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)** is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus newly discovered in 2019 that can cause serious medical conditions and death, especially for higher risk populations including the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.

**Digital literacy** means the skills associated with using technology so enable users can find, evaluate, organize, create and communicate information; develop digital citizenship; and promote the responsible use of technology.

**Digital resilience** encompasses the awareness, skills, agility and confidence needed to enable individuals to adapt to changing digital skill demands and become empowered users and learners of new technologies. Digital resilience improves our capacity to solve problems, learn new skills using technology and navigate digital transformations.

**Dislocated workers** are individuals who become separated from employment as a result of job loss, mass layoffs, global trade dynamics, or transitions in industry sectors. Dislocated workers are eligible to receive services to assist them in re-entering the workforce through the network of American Job Centers.

**Equity** refers to the fair and impartial inclusion of people of color and other traditionally marginalized or underrepresented groups in the workforce. In this resource, this term is often used in discussions of expanding access to learning and employment opportunities, such as the removal of structural and institutional barriers and the proactive provision of support needed to overcome barriers to participation.

**Essential occupations** are occupations which have been deemed essential by state or local governments during the pandemic, and typically include health care, food service and public transportation and safety, among others.

**GINI Coefficient** is a summary measure of income inequality. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0, indicating perfect equality (where everyone receives an equal share), to 1, perfect inequality (where only one recipient or group of recipients receives all the income).

**Industry-recognized credentials** are typically nondegree certifications that have value within an industry sector.

**Job quality** refers to characteristics of work that exist in a job as a result of decisions made by employers and community-based organizations including workplace safety, predictable working hours, wage level at or above self-sufficiency, protection from discrimination and harassment, and access to benefits that support health and wellbeing.

**Occupational literacy** refers to the development of specific skills needed for a particular occupation or industry.

**On-demand workforce**, also known as the "gig economy", refers to any worker who does not receive a W-2 tax form for some or all compensated work, such as independent contractors and the self-employed, as well as workers whose income is reported on a W-2 form whose schedules and places of work are unpredictable and episodic.

**Self-employment Assistance (SEA)** programs encourage dislocated workers to create their own employment opportunities by providing benefits to start their own small business. These are voluntary programs for states and can be provided to eligible individuals in lieu of unemployment compensation.<sup>f</sup>

**Short-time Compensation (STC)**, also known as work-sharing or shared-work program, is a voluntary state program for employers experiencing reduced work hours. Eligible employees can collect a percentage of their unemployment compensation benefits while remaining employed in order to avoid layoffs.<sup>g</sup>

**Skills gap** describes the differential between the skills required for today's jobs and the actual skills that the workforce currently possesses.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)** is a federal program to help recipients achieve self-sufficiency by gaining skills through training, or by receiving support services that reduce barriers to work – such as transportation or childcare. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

**Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)** is a federal grant program that provides funding to states and territories to provide families with financial assistance and related support services, including childcare assistance, job preparation and work assistance. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families.





**Workforce Development Boards (WDBs)** are part of the Public Workforce System, a network of federal, state, and local offices that support economic expansion and develop the talent of the nation's workforce. The Boards' role is to develop regional strategic plans and set funding priorities for their area. State and local Workforce Development Boards serve as connectors between the U.S. Department of Labor and local American Job Centers that deliver services to workers and employers.





**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** is the primary federal workforce development law designed to help jobseekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market and help employers find skilled workers. The U.S. Department of Labor administers the Act.

## APPENDIX

### Sample State Recovery Plan Matrix

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many state agencies, task forces and workforce councils have published plans that set timely and ambitious visions for economic recovery. The plans included herein represent a sample of the state-led approaches to implement elements found within the *State Roadmap for Workforce Recovery* – including the creation of goals for rapidly connecting jobseekers to services and work, policy strategies to expand digital access and skill development, and the establishment of key metrics to measure success toward enhancing job quality for all workers. These plans have been selected for their focus on objectives explored in this publication, as well as their application of principles such as equity, data and collaboration among multiple governmental and non-governmental partners.

State	Plan	Lead Agency	Publication Date	Summary	Objectives Featured
Alabama	<a href="#">Education and Workforce Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic</a>	The Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation	August 2020	This memo outlines the pandemic's statewide economic impact, opportunities to leverage federal funds to support learners and workers, and strategic priorities for long-term recovery.	Connecting Jobseekers; Digital Access and Skill Development 
California	<a href="#">Recovery for All</a>	Governor's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery	November 2020	The report details the Task Force's efforts to foster a sustainable, inclusive recovery and recommendations for areas of continued partnership to carry out state recovery goals.	Supportive Services; Job Quality 
Connecticut	<a href="#">Workforce Strategic Plan</a>	The Governor's Workforce Council	October 2020	This roadmap presents a strategic plan to ensure that every resident will benefit from equitable, life-long access to pathways for career advancement that fit their interests and capabilities while providing job opportunities that meet the needs of our employers.	Supportive Services; Connecting Jobseekers; Digital Access and Skill Development; Job Quality 
Hawai'i	<a href="#">Economic Recovery Draft Strategy Plan</a>	Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism	June 2020	This plan includes an economic development strategy that balances economic growth and the well-being of Hawai'i's people, culture, and environment.	Connecting Jobseekers; Digital Access and Skill Development 

Massachusetts	<a href="#">Massachusetts Economic Recovery Plan</a>	Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito	October 2020	This plan allocates \$774 million to stabilize and grow the Massachusetts economy by getting people back to work, supporting small businesses, fostering innovation, revitalizing downtowns and ensuring housing stability.	Supportive Services; Connecting Jobseekers; Digital Access and Skill Development 
Utah	<a href="#">Utah Leads Together Volume 4</a>	Economic Response Task Force	June 2020	The fourth volume of a phased plan to make strategic investments to create a stronger, more resilient and inclusive economy.	Supportive Services; Connecting Jobseekers; Digital Access and Skill Development  
Washington	<a href="#">Washington's Workforce Economic Recovery Plan</a>	Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board	September 2020	This report provides guideposts to help all populations connect with stable, living-wage career paths while receiving needed training and wrap-around support services.	Supportive Services; Connecting Jobseekers; Digital Access and Skill Development; Job Quality 

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> These principles have been adapted from the NGA-AACC Reskilling and Recovery Network Guiding Framework.
- <sup>2</sup> *Unemployment* refers to individuals who fall within the [six alternative measures of labor utilization](#) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Under-employment* refers to individuals who are employed but do not have enough paid work sufficient to meet basic needs and/or who are not participating in work that makes full use of their skills and abilities.
- <sup>3</sup> See *Additional Resources* for examples of an equity analysis assessment that may be adapted for further use.
- <sup>4</sup> Examples of sub-populations that should be considered can be found on Page 6 under “Equity-focused.”
- <sup>5</sup> *Essential occupations* are occupations which have been deemed essential by state or local governments during the pandemic and typically include health care, food service and public transportation and safety, among others.
- <sup>6</sup> For more information, see the six state [measures](#) of labor underutilization made available by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- <sup>7</sup> Examples of sub-populations that should be considered can be found on Page 6 under “Equity-focused.”
- <sup>8</sup> The Seattle Office of Planning and Policy Development published a [Growth and Equity Analysis](#) including a Displacement Risk Index and Access to Opportunity Index including factors such as access to a college or university, proximity to employment and proximity to regional job center.
- <sup>9</sup> Examples of sub-populations that should be considered can be found on Page 6 under “Equity-focused.”
- <sup>10</sup> Visit the [Opportunity Insights Opportunity Atlas](#) to explore neighborhood-level data to estimate future earnings distributions and social mobility.
- <sup>11</sup> Examples of sub-populations that should be considered can be found on Page 6 under “Equity-focused.”
- <sup>12</sup> As of December 2020, [14 states](#), Puerto Rico and Washington D.C. have enacted laws to require paid sick leave.
- <sup>13</sup> For more information about model employer policies, see the [State Guide for Preparing the Future Workforce Now](#).



444 N. Capitol Street NW, Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-624-5300 | [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)