

## Investing in America, Investing in Americans

### Workforce Development Programs at the U.S. Department of Commerce

“America is the most competitive country in the world, and that’s because of the strength of our workforce. But if we want to stay ahead, we need to ensure we are empowering our workers with the skills they need to secure the good-paying jobs we’re creating under President Biden’s Investing in America agenda.”

—U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo

On May 14, 2024, Secretary Raimondo announced a [Department Administrative Order](#) (DAO) to establish a Department of Commerce workforce policy agenda focused on preparing workers with the education and skills necessary to accelerate the development and deployment of critical and emerging technologies, which are essential to U.S. economic competitiveness and national security. The DAO frames a Commerce approach to workforce investments that is employer-led, worker-centric, and focused on equity.

Our nation’s global competitiveness derives from the ingenuity, the skills, and the drive of the American people. The United States has been the world’s leader in technological innovation for decades, and that leadership has happened in significant part because of public and private investments in education and workforce training.

Guided by its overarching mission to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities, the U.S. Department of Commerce supports policies that expand, create, and coordinate industrial and innovation clusters to advance U.S. competitiveness in tandem with a modern workforce development strategy. In short, the Department sees economic development and workforce development as inextricably linked.

The Department of Commerce has a three-part approach to building sustainable, employer-driven career pathways to meet employers’ need for talent and to connect Americans to good jobs:

1. **Invest** in employer-driven regional workforce education and training systems that lead to good jobs.
2. **Foster transformative employer practices** to address challenges in identifying, recruiting, and developing a diverse, skilled workforce.
3. **Produce** and disseminate **timely, clear data** and information to help Americans discover and participate in opportunities for skills development and economic advancement.

## Investments

- In the last 40 years, we have seen the same challenging story play out across the country. Manufacturing plants close down and family sustaining jobs dry up. The old style of “train and pray” workforce development didn’t work because our economic development and workforce development strategies need to go hand in hand. To that end, the Department has transformed from being a major voice in workforce policy into a major actor through programs that explicitly link economic development and workforce development.

Since January 2021, the Department has dedicated more than \$1.6 billion dollars and counting to workforce investment. Our investments are rooted in employer-led partnerships with education, labor, and community groups. The partnerships have clear employer commitments such that workers are gaining skills needed for real, high-quality jobs that will drive the innovation economy.

As guided by the DAO’s Principles for Workforce Investments, our workforce programs are:

- Employer-led to ensure skilled workers are connected to quality job opportunities.
- Guided by multiple community partners such as educational institutions, labor unions, community-based organizations, and economic development organizations.
- Include wrap-around services to support the most vulnerable populations.
- Advance educational and workplace diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Prioritize proven earn-and-learn models like Registered Apprenticeships.
- Lead to stackable, industry-recognized credentials and ensure that information about credentials is publicly accessible through the use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability.
- Measure and evaluate outcomes such as workers’ employment and earnings. Ensure that data is transparent, actionable, and linked back to those executing programs.
- Build sustainable systems and partnerships that endure to serve employers and workers beyond the federal investment.
- Connect workforce development to economic development.
- Coordinated across the federal government.
- Encourage the use of other government and private funding.

The programs are beginning to deliver results for American workers, families, communities, and businesses.

## Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- The **Good Jobs Challenge** invested \$500 million to train and place 50,000 workers in high quality jobs over the next three years. Launched in 2021, the Economic Development Administration program targets underserved populations across the country and provides wraparound services that overcome barriers to work, like career guidance, transportation, and childcare. To date, Good Jobs Challenge grantees in 31 states and 1 territory have trained more than 11,000 people and placed 3,000 workers into good jobs. We are also seeing our focus on equity pay off. Grantees are beating industry trends for black participation in energy and resilience, Hispanic participation in IT, and Native American participation in construction. And 18% of participants in skilled trades programs are women—close to double the national average. In FY24, Commerce secured an additional \$25 million to continue the program.
- The **Build Back Better Regional Challenge** is investing \$1 billion to develop and strengthen 21 regional industry clusters, boosting economic recovery from the pandemic. This includes \$270 million in workforce funding. The total federal funding is matched by more than \$300 million of local investment and leverages support from over 450 private sector and 27 labor unions or workers organizations.
- The **Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs)** program will strengthen U.S. economic and national security by investing in geographically diverse regions across the country with the potential to become globally competitive in the technologies and industries of the future in the next decade — thereby ensuring good jobs start, grow, and remain in the United States. While authorized at \$10 billion through the CHIPS & Science Act, EDA is currently laying the program's foundation. Thirty-one designated Tech Hubs were announced in October of 2023, all of which are competing for 5-10 implementation awards averaging \$40-\$70 million each that will be announced this summer (total of ~\$500 million). With these funds, eligible activities include workforce training and support services. All Tech Hubs consortia include a labor or workforce training organization in their membership.
- Authorized at \$1 billion, the **Recompete Pilot Program** will invest an initial \$200 million in areas where prime-age (25-54 years) employment significantly trails the national average, with the goal to close this gap through large, flexible investments. Eligible activities include workforce development and wraparound services to connect people to good jobs. EDA announced 22 Recompete Finalists in December of 2023. All Finalists are currently competing for 4-8 implementation awards averaging \$20-\$50 million each, which EDA expects to announce by the end of the summer 2024.

- Since January 2021, through the bureau's other programs, EDA has invested \$604 million across 462 projects. EDA's broad commitment to workforce development as integral to economic development ranges across its activities—from training America's STEM workforce to building training facilities for critical industries to engraining workforce development into regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS).

### **National Institute of Standards and Technology**

- The **CHIPS for America** Program will invest \$39 billion to incentivize companies to invest in facilities and equipment in the United States. The current proposed investments include \$190 million for workforce development activities in nine states, the largest U.S. investment in sectoral partnerships for a single industry. These projects are expected to support over 108,700 good jobs for Americans in both the construction and manufacturing sectors.
- While the \$39 billion in CHIPS Incentives funding will bring semiconductor manufacturing back to the United States, a robust research and development ecosystem will keep it here. The CHIPS for America Program is investing \$11 billion to develop and strengthen a robust domestic R&D ecosystem. The National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC) is the centerpiece of the CHIPS Research and Development Programs.
- The National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC), the centerpiece of the CHIPS Research and Development Programs, is expected to invest over \$5 billion in semiconductor related research, development, and workforce needs. At the core of NSTC's workforce efforts is the Workforce Center of Excellence which will support activities relating to the recruitment, training, and retention of workers across the semiconductor ecosystem.
- The CHIPS R&D Program anticipates up to approximately \$285 million for a first-of-its-kind ManufacturingUSA Institute focused on the development, validation, and use of digital twins for semiconductor manufacturing, advanced packaging, assembly, and test processes. The institute will foster a collaborative environment to significantly expand innovation, bring tangible benefits to both large and small-to-medium sized manufacturers, strengthen diverse research institutions, and ensure national reach in workforce development. Digital twins require a skilled workforce that can both design and manufacture chips, as well as workers capable of building, maintaining, and operating digital twin models and their physical counterparts. The CHIPS ManufacturingUSA Institute will operate an education and workforce development program that will expand access to underrepresented communities and small and medium-sized businesses that otherwise would not have access to such complex research and training environments.

- Under the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE), the [Regional Alliances and Multistakeholder Partnerships to Stimulate](#) Cybersecurity Education and Workforce Development ([RAMPS program](#)) is preparing Americans for quality jobs in cybersecurity through multistakeholder workforce partnerships of employers, schools and institutions of higher education, and other community organizations. In April 2024, NICE awarded nearly \$3.6 million in 18 cooperative agreements for organizations to build these partnerships and expects to award \$3 million for 15 additional agreements in the fall.

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

- Through the [Climate Ready Workforce](#) program, NOAA is awarding \$50 million in competitive grants to train and place workers in good jobs that enhance climate resilience. Following the model of EDA's Good Jobs Challenge, grantees will develop employer-led sectoral partnerships that will craft training programs with support services essential to open the door to historically underserved communities and individuals.

### **National Telecommunications and Information Administration**

- The [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\)](#) Program provides \$42.45B to expand affordable and reliable high-speed Internet access in all states, territories, and Washington, D.C. As Louisiana has already demonstrated, states and territories have the flexibility to allocate BEAD funding to educate and train workers for high-quality broadband installation jobs. Furthermore, the program has spurred the creation of more than 2,300 manufacturing jobs so that we connect everyone in America to high-speed internet networks built by American workers with American-made equipment.
- The [Digital Equity](#) Act provides \$2.75B across three programs to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity to reap the full benefits of our digital economy.

## **Employer Practices**

The Department works with employers to pursue workforce solutions that increase their competitiveness and help workers of all backgrounds to secure good jobs. With a unique relationship to the private sector and a commitment to equitable economic growth, the Department funds several programs and initiatives that partner with employers to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, skilled workforce.

- Good jobs are the foundation of an equitable economy that lifts up workers and families and makes businesses more competitive globally. They allow everyone to share in prosperity and support local communities and the entire U.S. economy. Workers value jobs that provides

stability and security for them and their families. Many companies recognize that providing good quality jobs gives them an edge and makes them an employer of choice. The Departments of Commerce and Labor partnered to identify what comprises a good job. The eight **Good Jobs Principles** create a framework for workers, businesses, labor unions, advocates, researchers, state and local governments, and federal agencies for a shared vision of job quality.

- Rooted in the Good Jobs Principles and NIST's Baldrige Excellence Framework, the **Job Quality Toolkit** provides strategies and actions that organizations can use to improve the quality of the jobs they offer. Identifying and improving the drivers most valued by workers increases their satisfaction and engagement and, in turn, benefits the organization's ability to compete for talent and achieve success in the marketplace.
- The **Million Women in Construction** initiative aims to expand the construction workforce by doubling the number of women in construction over the next decade. The initiative's CHIPS Women in Construction Framework is a set of five best practices. By voluntarily adopting the Framework, companies plan to collaborate with contractors, trades unions, and other community workforce partners to implement best practices that will expand the construction workforce by increasing the participation of women and economically disadvantaged individuals. These recruitment and retention best practices will help support on-time and successful completion of CHIPS Incentives Program funded projects. The first voluntary company commitments to participate in the framework were from Intel Corporation and Micron Technology.
- The Department leads two Investing in America **Workforce Hubs: Phoenix and Upstate New York**. In each Hub, the Department, in partnership with the White House, convenes local and regional partners to maximize the impact of historic federal investments and create pipelines of skilled workers for the high-quality jobs tied to the Departments proposed investments in the semiconductor industry.
- Based at NIST, the **Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)** National Network helps small and medium-sized manufacturers with an extensive range of workforce needs that address all stages of the employee lifecycle including strategic talent planning, recruitment and talent acquisition, customized training for entry-level workers, leadership coaching and development, organizational culture and employee engagement and succession planning.
- Coordinated through NIST, **Manufacturing USA** is a national network created to secure U.S. global leadership in advanced manufacturing through large-scale public-private collaboration on technology, supply chain and workforce development. The 17 institutes align manufacturers of

all sizes, academia, and government to improve the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturing, help fill the gap between basic research and commercialization, and train a diverse and skilled manufacturing workforce. The network is anticipated to stand up two additional Department of Commerce-sponsored institutes. In addition to the previously mentioned CHIPS ManufacturingUSA Institute, NIST has issued a notice of intent for a competition for a new institute focused on using artificial intelligence to improve the resilience of U.S. manufacturing. The institute will conduct applied R&D projects and establish employer-led sectoral partnerships aimed at developing accessible, effective, scalable training resources and pathways for the skilled workforce needed to move innovation into industrial practice.

- Within the International Trade Administration, [SelectUSA](#) focuses on facilitating job-creating foreign direct investment into the United States and raising awareness of the critical role that economic development plays in the U.S. economy. Since its inception, SelectUSA has facilitated more than \$200 billion in investment, creating and/or retaining over 200,000 U.S. jobs. A well-trained workforce is essential to spurring more foreign direct investment. To that end, the Department launched [SelectTalentUSA](#) in May 2023. This novel partnership with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education provides assistance to help foreign businesses solve their U.S. workforce recruitment and retention challenges. The three departments support companies' efforts to educate, train, develop, and retain a diverse, highly-skilled workforce for quality job opportunities, drawing from a full range of workforce services and connections on a local, state and national level. In its pilot year, SelectTalentUSA has had a focus on the German, Swiss, and Austrian markets, energizing existing cooperation with those countries on expanding apprenticeships in the United States.

## Data

The Department of Commerce is a leading federal source of labor market data and research. Key data that guide our understanding and decision-making about work and education have their roots in the Census Bureau and its American Community Survey, Current Population Survey, Annual Business Survey, and Center for Economic Studies, among other surveys and programs. Complementing it are research reports and datasets from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, NIST, EDA, and other Commerce bureaus.

- The [Census Bureau's Center of Excellence \(COE\)](#) is a novel interdisciplinary team that collaborates with federal agencies on program monitoring, impact assessment, and evaluation. The COE currently has a joint research project to combine Good Jobs Challenge program data with Census Bureau survey and administrative data assets to study near- and long-term outcomes that could not be assessed without this combined approach.

- The **Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)** program at the Census Bureau produces unique labor market information on trends in employment, earnings, hiring, job creation and destruction, job-to-job dynamics, and worker origin-destination dynamics. Much of the data includes detailed time series by geography, age, sex, and industry as far back as 1990. The data rely on the Local Employment Dynamics Partnership, which integrates state-supplied administrative records on workers and employers with existing censuses, surveys, and other administrative records. The result is a rich longitudinal data system on U.S. employment.
- The newest LEHD data series is **Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO)**, which provides earnings and employment outcomes for college and university graduates by degree level, degree major, post-secondary institution, and state of institution. These statistics are generated by matching university transcript data with a national database of jobs, using state-of-the-art confidentiality protection mechanisms to protect the underlying data.
- The **American Community Survey (ACS)** is the premier source for detailed information about America's changing population, housing and workforce. With a sample size of 3.5 million households, the ACS is the largest household survey in the United States. It collects and produces information on social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics about our nation's population every year. This information provides an important tool for communities to use to see how they are changing. The ACS provides annual labor force estimates for geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or more (this includes the nation, all states and the District of Columbia, all congressional districts, approximately 800 counties, and 500 metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas, among others). In addition, 5-year ACS data cover geographic areas down to the census tract and block group levels.
- A partnership between the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE), Lightcast, and CompTIA, **CyberSeek** provides detailed, actionable data about supply and demand in the cybersecurity job market. Its interactive heat map provides a granular snapshot of demand and supply data for cybersecurity jobs at the state and metro area levels. The interactive career pathway shows key jobs within cybersecurity, common transition opportunities between them, and detailed information about the salaries, credentials, and skillsets associated with each role.