



## **Skills for California 2021 Policy Priorities**

Skills for California is a statewide network of organizations advancing workforce development policies that remove systemic barriers and promote an inclusive economy for all Californians. The Network's guiding principles are equity, pathways to good jobs, and systems innovation. As we continue to experience a challenging economic recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are calling on our state leaders to use every policy lever possible to protect and support our most vulnerable workers, communities, and small businesses. As a network, we believe that the path forward is to rebuild equitably.

Our 2021 policy priorities include securing a safety net for underserved Californians, supporting the expansion of industry-specific training that leads to quality jobs, expanding career technical education, and increasing digital inclusion. Workforce development initiatives should center the voices of workers, particularly workers of color, and support the workforce needs of high-road employers. The Network believes that workforce development strategies should create equitable pathways to **good jobs** that are safe, free from discrimination and harassment, pay family-supporting wages, provide valuable benefits, welcome workers' concerns and ideas, provide for worker advancement, and give workers the stability, predictability, and support necessary to take care of family needs that arise outside of the workplace.

The history of systemic racism in America has created an economy in which people of color do not have access to the same opportunities as white people. As a result, even controlling for age, gender, and education, Black Californians make \$10,500 less than their white peers. Transforming the future requires elevating critical issues impacting workers of color and small businesses as the state endeavors to create a more inclusive, equitable, and racially just economy where everyone has what they need to thrive. We need to rebuild a community where access and representation means everyone has a voice at the table; success is measured in terms of reducing racial economic disparities and promoting economic mobility; and quality jobs are the cornerstone of our economy. This effort should include, but not be limited to, actions aimed at eliminating structural racism in workforce development policies and practices.

The Skills for CA network focuses on workforce development, which includes, but is not limited to, education and training. We know that California cannot train its way out of an economic crisis or build an inclusive economy based solely on increasing skills and access. Indeed, workforce development policy must include policies that secure people's basic needs and expand access to affordable child care, housing, transportation, food, and health care; protect the health and safety of essential frontline workers; make sure the workplace is fair and free from discrimination; and create more quality jobs. We look forward to working alongside the administration, legislature, and stakeholder partners to build and secure an inclusive economic recovery for all.

### **Protect and Expand Funding for Workforce Development to Enable Equitable Access for Workers to Good Jobs**

- *Create more access to workforce development programs for marginalized communities through flexible, outcome-oriented, and equity-focused funding processes to support culturally and linguistically competent community-based organizations (CBOs) in delivering services. This should particularly include CBOs that are led by communities of color and*

*have traditionally been excluded from the workforce development system, despite providing critical workforce and supportive services to community members.*

- *Provide multi-year funding allocations for new workforce development programs that support program design, start-up, implementation and evaluation, in order to enable continuity of programming and to verify that programs are having intended results.*

### **Expand and Increase Understanding of “Good Jobs”**

- *Include the worker voice in an agency’s decision-making process by creating positions for worker representatives on key policy bodies, and embed metrics for good jobs (e.g. wages, retention, benefits) into state plans to provide accountability for equity and job quality.*
- *Increase workplace safety standards.*
- *Increase incentives for employers, workforce development organizations, or other intermediaries to create and support quality jobs and paid, quality training that prioritizes workers of color.*
- *Expand earn and learn upskilling opportunities for incumbent workers in low-wage industries.*
- *Utilize the state’s procurement and purchasing processes to incentivize businesses to adopt high-road, equitable policies and practices that better support employees.*

### **Strengthen and Secure a Social Safety Net that Supports Pathways to Good Jobs**

- *Increase availability and access to social safety net resources for California’s most vulnerable workers and communities to meet their basic needs such as food, healthcare, housing, and childcare as they work to achieve their career goals.*
- *Increase funding for state financial relief and safety net support to California’s 1.5 million undocumented workers and mixed-status families who do not qualify for federal relief or benefits programs due to their immigration status.*
- *Increase access to supportive programming and services for people who have been formerly incarcerated.*

### **Support and Expand Industry-Specific Training and Hiring Strategies that Lead to Good Jobs**

- *Expand high-road industry partnerships, that engage multiple business leaders and labor organizations within an industry with a range of education, training, and service providers. These partnerships should create regionally specific, industry-targeted strategies that meet the needs of workers, businesses, and communities alike by developing training and reemployment strategies for those who have lost their jobs, as well as upskilling and career advancement strategies for low-wage, frontline workers.*
- *Preserve and expand funding for industry-based job training and pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and paid work-based learning – particularly for workers of color, immigrants, women, and other marginalized Californians.*
- *Invest in infrastructures – such as broadband, infrastructure for climate resilience, and public health infrastructure – to create good jobs; ensure that training and jobs prioritize workers of*

*color, immigrants, and women who have traditionally been excluded from these opportunities.*

### **Support and Expand Career and Technical Education**

- *Expand access to short-term and long-term training opportunities and identify ways for adults to earn quality, industry-recognized credentials, certificates, and degrees in an accelerated fashion.*
- *Increase support for students in career and technical education programs at California Community Colleges to secure financial aid to assist with costs such as tuition, books, digital devices, and other supply costs, as well as assistance for basic needs such as food, childcare, and housing so that they are able to continue to work to achieve their education and career goals.*
- *Create new partnerships between education and training providers and employers to invest in career advancement for low-wage, frontline workers.*
- *Raise awareness of ability-to-benefit for adult learners that can qualify for financial aid without a high school diploma.*
- *Raise awareness of California's new dual enrollment law that allows adult learners to earn college credit as they earn their high school equivalency.*

### **Expand Digital Access and Learning**

- *Support and expand access to digital skill-building, up-to-date digital devices, and affordable broadband access so that more Californians can secure benefits, services, education, and other online training programs.*