HIGH ROAD TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS
AND THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE FUNDING

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This issue brief reflects EDGE's perspective on how California can build on the promise of High Road Training Partnerships by strengthening long-term workforce funding, expanding access for high-quality training, supporting learners, and improving how the state measures outcomes.

WHAT ARE HIGH ROAD TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS?

High Road Training Partnerships (HRTP) are industry-based, worker-centered partnerships that bring together employers, labor, education and training providers, community organizations, and public agencies to address workforce needs while advancing job quality, equity, worker voice, and climate resilience. Launched in 2017 as a state demonstration project, the model has helped California test a more coordinated approach to training, job quality, and regional economic needs.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

California has invested in promising workforce models, including High Road Training Partnerships. As the state looks ahead, there is an opportunity to strengthen how workforce funding is structured so effective programs can be sustained, high-quality training partnerships can access resources, and learners can receive the support they need to complete training and move into family-sustaining jobs.

WHAT HAS WORKED

- HRTPs have shown the value of aligning training with real industry demand and worker needs.
- The model encourages shared responsibility among employers, labor, training providers, and public agencies.
- Programs can support learners through outreach, training, supportive services, placement, and retention.
- HRTPs can help connect workers facing economic barriers to quality jobs and career advancement.

THE CHALLENGE

California's workforce funding remains fragmented, competitive, and often time-limited. As funding becomes more constrained, providers are pushed to pursue whichever opportunities are available, even when those opportunities may not fully support the range of effective training models in the field. This can unintentionally create uneven access. Some providers are better positioned to compete because they have existing partnerships, administrative capacity, or experience navigating state grants. Others may be deeply connected to workers and communities but lack the infrastructure needed to access funding.

WHERE EDGE LANDS

California should continue to recognize labor-management partnerships as an important and valuable workforce model, especially where they help advance job quality, worker voice, industry alignment, and career advancement. At the same time, California should also support other high-quality training providers and partnerships that are helping learners complete training and move into family-sustaining jobs.

A strong statewide approach can do both: sustain and grow labor-management partnerships, while also creating parallel funding opportunities for other effective providers that meet clear quality expectations, demonstrate strong outcomes, and serve workers and communities well.

WHAT THE FUTURE COULD LOOK LIKE

- Stable, statewide workforce infrastructure funding for high-quality training partnerships and aligned models.
- Multi-year funding that supports the full cost of learner success, including outreach, instruction, supportive services, employer engagement, placement, retention, and data reporting.
- Simplified applications, streamlined reporting, and strong data privacy protections for workers, technical assistance, and capacity-building support.
- Use of existing structures, including regional workforce boards, community colleges, adult education, apprenticeship programs, HRTPs, and state data systems.
- Common outcome measures that track completion, employment, wage gains, retention, career advancement, credential attainment, job quality, and return on investment.

QUESTIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASE

1. How can California sustain effective workforce models beyond one-time funding?
2. How can California secure dedicated funding for true labor-management partnerships that advance job quality, worker voice, industry alignment, and career advancement?
3. How can California also invest in other high-quality workforce programs, while making shared quality expectations a consistent expectation of state workforce funding across programs?
4. What funding structures help smaller, community-based, or emerging providers participate without weakening accountability?
5. How should the state define quality across different training models?
6. What data should California use to measure employment, wage gains, retention, advancement, and return on investment?

BOTTOM LINE

California has an opportunity to build on the progress of High Road Training Partnerships and other workforce investments by creating a more stable, accessible, and outcomes-driven funding strategy. Future investments should support a range of high-quality training models, reduce barriers for effective partnerships, and ensure public dollars are helping workers move into family-sustaining careers.

RESOURCES

CWDB's HRTP One-Pager — cwdb.ca.gov/OneSheet_HRTP
HRTP Essential Elements — cwdb.ca.gov/HRTP-Essential-Elements
UCLA Labor Center Evaluation — labor.ucla.edu/Eval_FINAL-REPORT
CWDB HRTP Program Page — cwdb.ca.gov/high-road-training-partnerships

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