

America Works:

Education and Training for Tomorrow's Jobs

National Governors Association
Chair's Initiative 2013-2014

A Letter from the Chair

Preparing America's 21st century workforce to keep pace and stay competitive is an issue that not only calls for national attention, it also demands gubernatorial leadership. Ensuring our states' and citizens' future economic security will require significant improvements to our education system and workforce training programs. It also will require closer relationships among our high schools, colleges, workforce training providers and employers. That's why I've chosen to focus my 2013-2014 National Governors Association Chair's Initiative on *America Works: Education and Training for Tomorrow's Jobs*.

Governors are uniquely positioned to foster stronger connections between education and the workforce because within states, they are the sole individual who has responsibility for both public education and economic development. States and the businesses that drive state economies can help secure their own economic future by aligning education institutions and workforce training efforts with the projected demands of tomorrow's labor market.

Beyond the benefits to the businesses that make up the states' economies, these changes will improve access to economic opportunities for the citizens of each state. We know it will be the workers with education and training in fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and other skilled trades who will be best prepared to capture the high-wage jobs of the next decade, including those in health care, management, scientific and technical consulting, business services and advanced manufacturing. Those are the jobs that will support families and help states' economies thrive.

Together, we can work to prepare our workforce for the 21st century, securing the economic future of all Americans.

Sincerely,

Mary Fallin

National Governors Association Chair, 2013-2014



The Challenges

Nearly 50 years ago, more than three of every four jobs only required a high school diploma or less, and most paid a good wage. Today, that number has dropped to 40 percent for jobs available to high school graduates and dropouts—and fewer than a third of those jobs pay more than \$25,000. Failing to provide all students with opportunities to successfully navigate postsecondary education will cap far too many students' potential and access to the middle class.

Nationally, just more than three-quarters of public high school students make it to graduation, and only about half of the students who continue their education finish a degree or workforce certificate program. Additionally, roughly two-thirds of the 2020 U.S. workforce is already of working age today, and one in four of those adults lacks the basic literacy and numeracy skills to qualify for most jobs.

Thus, the challenge is clear: get more students to meet higher standards by the end of high school and then create the opportunities for those students, as well as returning adults, to successfully complete a degree or career-training program that prepares them for a well-paying job and career. Meeting that challenge will require a better understanding of states' markets for educated workers as well as improving the quality of the education and workforce training institutions that can prepare the future workforce. It also will require innovative partnerships among business, education and government to increase the number of degrees awarded and credentials attained to better match the supply of new workers with the future demands of business. Gathering and analyzing more and better data will be critical in determining where changes need to be implemented and prioritizing which steps are necessary to accomplish that objective.

The role of education must be more than merely to prepare individuals for a job. This nation must understand that a postsecondary degree or relevant workforce certificate is the "new minimum" and without it, our young people will not be able to access the middle class, the American dream and the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship and a fuller life.

The Opportunity

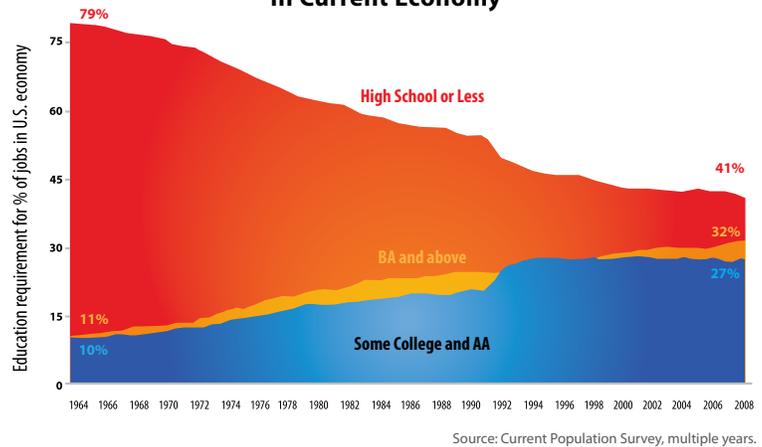
To provide the profile and assistance to states to address the issues described above, *America Works: Education and Training for Tomorrow's Jobs*, will focus on improving the capacity and effectiveness of states' education and workforce training systems and aligning those systems with the needs of the state economies. The initiative will focus on:

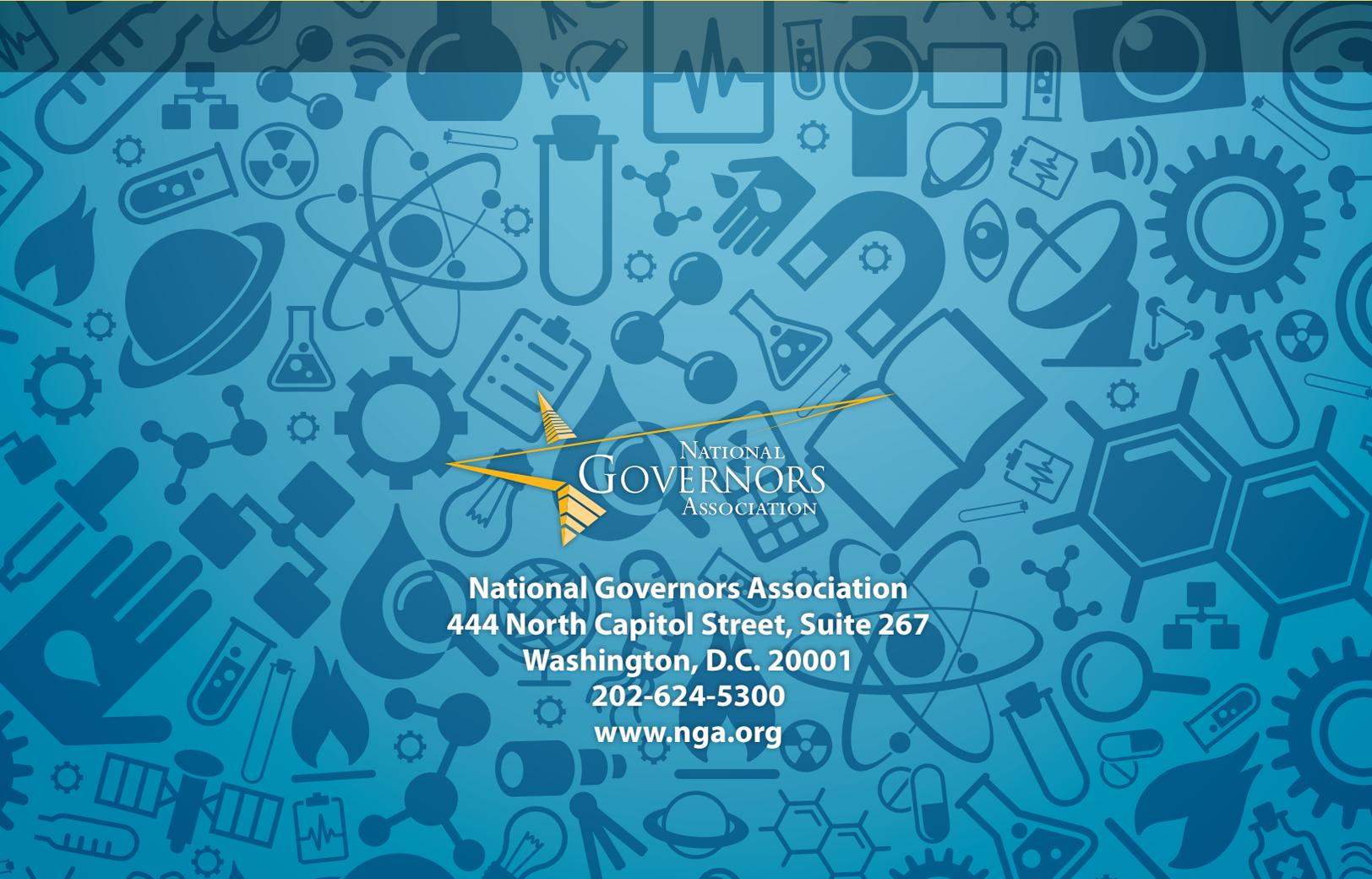
- Engaging education, business and government leaders in a dialogue about what governors can do to more closely align K-12, universities, community and technical colleges and workforce training providers with future labor demands. It will highlight leading policies, practices and partnerships for meeting emerging knowledge and skill needs in the states.
- Supporting governors and their staff to use data and information that will help them: identify their states' future labor demands, prioritize changes in the education and workforce training systems to meet those demands and take action to achieve desired results. This initiative will help governors use data to establish state-specific industry priorities that focus state policy and resources on enhancing the effectiveness and alignment of the state's human capital pipeline.

This Initiative Will...

- Elevate the importance of postsecondary education—a degree or workforce certificate—as the "new minimum" in order to gain access to opportunities.
- Launch at a national event in Washington, D.C., which provides a venue for industry leaders and policy organizations to learn more about the initiative's priorities and objectives and identify ways to coordinate their activities in states and align with common interests of governors.
- Provide each governor with state-specific return on investment data for degree and certificate attainment.
- Host two or three state-based, regional governors' roundtables with education, business and industry leaders in key growth fields focusing on identifying priorities for state action.
- Produce a governors' guide and case studies on leading state efforts to integrate and use education and workforce data to better align higher education and workforce training with state specific labor needs.
- Kick off an intensive effort with six to eight states to develop and implement a policy agenda to build and strengthen education and workforce training programs, promote stronger collaboration and information sharing between education and workforce/economic development agencies and organizations and expand the state's public and private sector education and training capacity to meet its future workforce needs.

Defining the Problem: Increasing Need for More Education in Current Economy





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