

2013 Summit Talking Points

February 2013

There are 12.3 million unemployed U.S. workers, yet employers cannot find workers with the right skills. Congress must invest in and improve our workforce development system.

The Problem

1. **The Skills Gap:** Despite continued high unemployment, employers face difficulties finding qualified workers. [*Give local examples.*]

The Jobs: The skills gap is in the middle—jobs that require more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree. Federal workforce development programs prepare people for these jobs. [*Share middle-skill fact sheet for your state.*]

The Workforce: Nearly two-thirds of job openings in the next decade will require postsecondary education or training; 90 million U.S. workers have barriers to postsecondary: low literacy, limited English, or lack a credential past high school.

2. **Federal Funding:** In the last decade, funding for federal workforce development programs has declined by over 30 percent, with over \$1 billion cut since 2010. Congress continues to consider deeper cuts. [*Share state sheet with sequesters impact.*]
3. **Federal Policy:** The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is more than 10 years overdue for reauthorization. Other human capital programs—Perkins Act, Higher Education Act (HEA), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)—are due to be reauthorized. All build skills, but administrative barriers hinder alignment.

The Solution

Federally-funded workforce development programs that engage employers, lead to industry-recognized credentials, and directly link training with jobs are part of the solution to the skills gap and full economic recovery. [*Share examples of effective programs in your community.*]

Action

1. **Adopt a balanced approach** to deficit reduction, with no more cuts to discretionary programs. These programs, including workforce development, have already absorbed more than \$1.5 trillion in cuts since 2010.
2. **Reauthorize** expired or expiring workforce legislation including WIA, Perkins, HEA, TAA and TANF. Reject reauthorization proposals that reduce funding or limit access to services and supports for jobseekers and employers. Reject consolidation for consolidation's sake. Use reauthorization to create a more integrated, aligned system.
3. **Invest significantly more in Adult Basic Education.** Set clear goals to serve more adults each year. Immigration reform provides an opportunity. Proposed increases in H1-B visas could generate \$1 billion in new funding that could fund this expanded investment that would help more workers get on the pathway toward citizenship or new careers.

