

# Obama announces initiative to train workers quickly in tech jobs

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WASHINGTON — Long-term unemployed people in Kansas City, Mo., and other places around the country will get a chance to update their skills and land coveted tech-sector jobs as part of a White House initiative to train low-skilled American workers to fill high-tech jobs.

President Barack Obama announced the initiative – dubbed “[TechHire](#)” – in remarks Monday at the National League of Cities conference in Washington. Kansas City will be among the first cities to participate.

Tech jobs pay about 50 percent better than the average private-sector job, and they don’t always require a four-year degree or an engineering background, just specialized training that can be obtained at community colleges or in the military, Obama said. But employers often rule out good candidates because, he said, they don’t have “traditional qualifications.”

“So TechHire communities are going to help employers link up and find and hire folks based on their actual skills and not just their resumes,” the president said to applause. “Because it turns out, it doesn’t matter where you learned code, it just matters how good you are in writing code. If you can do the job, you should get the job.”

Twenty-one cities, states and rural regions across the country will participate in the TechHire launch, with the goal of building a training-to-job pipeline to fill more than 120,000 tech openings, according to the White House.

The fast-tracked, work-based training models promoted as part of the initiative aim to benefit communities that are underrepresented in the tech sector, such as women, minorities, low-income workers and veterans.

“We tend to think that all these tech jobs are in Silicon Valley . . . but the truth is two-thirds of these jobs are in non-high-tech industries like health care, or manufacturing, or banking, which means they are in every corner of this country,” Obama said.

The Kansas City program, known as “Reboot U,” will tap public-private partnerships and \$500,000 in grant money from the Missouri Division of Workforce Development.

Designed to help long-term unemployed people find work in health care, small businesses and information technology firms, “Reboot U” will offer on-site training and paid apprenticeships or internships of eight to 12 weeks.

The partners that have signed on to provide training and job opportunities in Kansas City are the University of Central Missouri and Metropolitan Community College, Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, the University of Kansas Medical Center, business incubator Think Big Partners and Wireco WorldGroup, a manufacturer of wire rope.

The program will start with about 50 trainees, and is expected to grow.

Kansas City’s participation in TechHire reflects the city’s culture of innovation, Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said in a statement Monday.

“This new initiative will bring together the best and brightest of Kansas City’s employers and educators to grow more good-paying jobs and tech opportunities for our state,” she said.

Other cities participating in TechHire include Albuquerque, N.M., Detroit, Los Angeles, Louisville, Ky., Memphis, Tenn., Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Francisco and Portland, Ore.

In rural eastern Kentucky, universities and community colleges will develop nontraditional educational approaches such as “coding boot camps” and online training in fields such as software, Web and app development, network administration and cybersecurity, according to a statement from Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, an organization on workforce solutions in the area.

In Louisville, over 20 information technology employers have been convened as part of the city’s Code Louisville initiative to train and place new software developers. The city will work to boost employers’ recognition of relevant skills.

Apart from the partnership with communities, private companies such as LinkedIn and Capital One will use data to help identify the skills employers need and help hire new tech workers.

The Obama administration also has made a couple of earlier efforts to boost tech industries. The Department of Labor last year announced \$100 million through its American Apprenticeship Grants competition to spur cooperation among employers, workers and training providers.

Last month, the president's fiscal year 2016 budget proposed \$300 million to support partnerships among regional employers in order to develop assessments that would help people qualify for IT jobs.