

UpSkillAmerica

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TOP U.S. BUSINESS LEADERSHIP LAUNCHES NEW EMPLOYER-LED MOVEMENT TO EXPAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR 24 MILLION FRONTLINE AMERICAN WORKERS

*Robust effort will bolster business investment in worker education and training to help
grow the middle class*

Washington, D.C., January 21, 2015 – Recognizing the critical need to train more American workers to fill the jobs that businesses are creating, a coalition of the nation’s top business leadership groups today launched [UpSkill America](#) - an employer-led movement dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for American workers through education and workforce development.

UpSkill America’s members include:

- [Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships](#)
- [Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board](#)
- [The Aspen Institute Skills for America’s Future](#)
- [The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning](#)
- [The National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#)

There are approximately 24 million frontline workers – from food service workers to daycare workers, from health care workers to construction laborers – in stagnant, low-wage jobs across America. Yet, according to the U.S. Department of Education and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, they are only about half as likely to receive career-relevant education that leads to credentials as their high-skilled colleagues, hindering their opportunity for advancement. And more and more employers are voicing their struggles to find skilled workers to fill the jobs they have available. In fact, U.S. businesses will need 123 million skilled workers by 2020. Currently, only 50 million people possess the skills to meet these qualifications.

UpSkill America’s coalition of business, education, and workforce training organizations has a three-part mission: 1) **recognize** leading employers that provide expanded career opportunities for their workers; 2) **promote** the widespread adoption of business policies and practices that increase economic opportunity; and 3) **cultivate** education and workforce development efforts that support and advance these initiatives.

“Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of America’s economy, and many of us are investing in the advancement of our frontline workers. But the good work being done by businesses of all sizes across a diversity of sectors can be built upon and expanded. Bringing

these efforts to scale through public and private investments will result in a win-win for our business and their workers,” said Michael Tamasi, Chair of Business Leaders United and President and CEO of AccuRounds a contract manufacturer headquartered in Avon, Massachusetts that machines and assembles precision turned components.

“As a member of UpSkill America, the Committee for Economic Development looks forward to sharing and supporting the most effective company policies that help employees advance and stay competitive,” said Michael Petro, Executive Vice President of the Committee for Economic Development. “Together with our fellow business leaders, we’ll strengthen the economy and American Dream for our nation’s workers.”

At the White House this spring, UpSkill America will bring together business leaders, business leadership organizations, and education and workforce development organizations to showcase the commitments of businesses investing in their workforce and highlight the role of education and workforce organizations supporting this work.

In addition, UpSkill America will develop publications, best practice guides, and other resources to help guide businesses on how to invest in and how to promote career growth and economic opportunity for their workers.

Based on discussions with employers, below are some of the most significant areas of best practice related to employer-provided training. To learn more go to: UpSkillAmerica.org.

Best Practices for Employer-Provided Training

1. Increase investments in frontline workers to pave the way for job progression and better pay
2. Expand employee eligibility of higher education benefits and encourage more frontline workers to take advantage of them
3. Reward frontline workers' on-the-job training and skill mastery with promotions and incentives
4. Work with other employers and partners so that frontline workers’ learning and training leads to marketable and nationally recognized credentials that can generate higher pay
5. Create or expand apprenticeship program for investing in training
6. Offer scheduling flexibility or stability - and related supports - to frontline workers that allows them to succeed at training, higher education, and career advancement

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Skills for America's Future, an initiative of [The Aspen Institute](http://TheAspenInstitute) an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC., is a non-partisan partnership of businesses and community colleges. Its purpose is to address the dual problems of high unemployment and the difficulty many employers face in finding workers with the right skills by connecting employers to community colleges and workforce partners so students can be better equipped with the skills necessary to find and retain jobs in a 21st century economy. Announced in October 2010 by President Obama, the effort had already received commitments from some of the nation's leading employers including Accenture, Gap, Inc., Pacific Gas & Electric, McDonalds, UPS, and United Technology Corporation (UTC). Skills for America’s Future will manage the UpSkill America campaign. For more information, visit www.skillsforamericasfuture.org

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Chicago, Illinois that assists adults with their educational endeavors, finding practical ways to help them move forward in their careers and earn college credit for learning acquired through life and work experiences toward the completion of a postsecondary degree or credential. CAEL works with the public sector, private sector industries, and higher education institutions to ensure that working adults receive the most efficient training and education to occupy a meaningful professional place in a 21st century economy. Since 1974, CAEL has assisted colleges and universities to develop programs that evaluate adults' non-collegiate learning for college credit, and has assisted companies and industries in upskilling their front-line workforce. More information is available at www.cael.org.

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions, based in Boston, MA, is a growing national partnership of employers, workers, communities and philanthropy that strengthens local economies by implementing demand-driven strategies that create talent supply chains, advances workers into family-supporting careers, and improves workforce development systems. Operating in 35 communities across the United States, the National Fund promotes the development of employer-led industry partnerships that guide educational and training investments in skills and credentials. To learn more visit <http://nfwsolutions.org>.

Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships (BLU) is an employer-led effort to diversify and strengthen the employer voice in federal and state skills policy discussions and to share effective practices throughout a peer network. BLU represents nearly 400 employer partners in more than 30 states, covering a wide range of in-demand industries, including construction, manufacturing, health care, information technologies and financial services. Most of BLU's employers are small to medium-sized, though BLU includes a true range of firms: from businesses of less than 10 employees to Fortune 500 corporations. For more information, visit www.nationalskillscoalition.org/national-initiatives/business-leaders-united.

Founded in 1942, **the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED)** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions to our nation's most critical issues. CED's work is grounded on seven core principles: sustainable capitalism, long-term economic growth, efficient fiscal and regulatory policy, competitive and open markets, a globally competitive workforce, equal economic opportunity, and nonpartisanship in the nation's interest. CED's research falls under four issue areas: fiscal health, education, global competitiveness, and democratic institutions. For more information, visit www.ced.org