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*Building Regional Communities*

*National Association of Regional Councils*



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# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## **The nation faces workforce shortages in critical sectors.**

A skilled and adequate workforce is essential for regional economic success. Yet the economy in 2024 will be defined by workforce shortages and skills gaps across many sectors. In the infrastructure sector alone 17 million workers are expected to leave the workforce over the next decade, according to the Brookings Institution. This comes at a time when historic levels of federal funding from legislation such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), are reaching every corner of the United States. A lack of skilled workers slows the delivery of federally funded projects and drives up overall project costs.



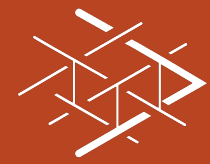
## **The workforce shortage affects regional councils.**

Many regional organizations are recipients of IIJA and IRA funding. Regional councils, serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Council of Governments (COG), and/or the Economic Development District (EDD), plan and implement critical projects within their jurisdiction, and are impacted by the lack of workforce availability. A lack of skilled workers directly impacts regional organization's ability to successfully deliver on federal funding.



## **Regional councils are helping address the workforce challenge.**

Centralina Regional Council's NEXTGEN Council links youth and young adults with resources to support their pathway to a solid career. The NEXTGEN Council provides expertise in youth policy and assists the Centralina Workforce Development Boards with building sustainable relationships with young and young adult-oriented stakeholders, finding jobs with career paths for youth and young adults, utilizing cross-country resources to serve youth and young adults, and creating relationships between secondary education, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and community colleges.



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## To ensure a resilient infrastructure workforce, Congress should:

### **Increase federal funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):**

Increased funding for WIOA Title I programs should be provided in FY 2024. Enacted in 2014, WIOA provides direct funding to states and localities to implement workforce employment and training programs. Increasing WIOA funding would allow regional Workforce Development Boards (WDB) to strengthen their workforce development programs.



### **Continue to support youth programs that engage new generations of talent:**

Programs that help expose students to industry jobs at an early age, specifically within K-12 education, recognize there are multiple pathways to high quality and long-lasting careers.



### **Encourage and incentivize federal apprenticeship programs:**

The Registered Apprenticeship Program, which is approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), helps develop skilled workers by combining paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction.



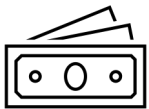
### **Update federal workforce development and education programs to ensure training of at-risk and underserved communities:**

Skills development is especially important in emerging sectors such as energy, technology, environmental, and advanced manufacturing.



### **Allocate funding for research and establish technical assistance:**

Fund research on successful workforce training programs and provide technical assistance to help local workforce boards build more effective sector partnerships.



### **Include specific requirements for workforce development activities:**

In future legislation, requirements for workforce development activities can ensure investment and attention is spent on providing an adequate national workforce.



### **Grant regional workforce development entities authority and flexibility:**

More authority and flexibility allows workforce boards to creatively respond to the needs of local employment offices, job seekers, and businesses.



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