

PROJECT WORKFORCE

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Project Workforce: Goals for Strengthening Arizona's Skilled Labor Force and Vocational Education

Goal 1: Promote Skilled Labor and Vocational Careers as Equally Valuable to Traditional Higher Education

- **Objective:** Shift public perception to recognize vocational and skilled labor careers as high-status, high-paying, and essential to Arizona's economic future.
- **Action:** Launch a statewide campaign aimed at students, parents, and educators to highlight the value, opportunities, and respect associated with careers in trades, manufacturing, healthcare, mining, and technology. Focus on long-term financial security, job satisfaction, and the positive impact these roles have on Arizona's growth.
- **Target Audience:** High school students, parents, educators, Arizona employers, and community leaders.

Goal 2: Integrate Vocational and Trade Education into High School Curriculum

- **Objective:** Ensure that vocational and trade training is an integral part of Arizona's high school educational system, equipping students with the skills they need to enter the workforce immediately after graduation.
- **Action:** Collaborate with Arizona's Department of Education, local school districts, and private sector employers to develop and implement vocational training programs, certifications, and career pathways within high schools.
- **Target Audience:** High school administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

Goal 3: Partner with Arizona's Private Sector to Design Relevant Trade and Vocational Curricula

- **Objective:** Align high school vocational programs with the actual needs of Arizona's employers in key industries such as manufacturing, mining, healthcare, and construction.

- **Action:** Facilitate partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and businesses in Arizona to create curriculum that directly addresses skills gaps in these industries. Encourage companies to provide input on the types of certifications and skill sets most needed.
- **Target Audience:** Private sector companies, high school educators, school boards, and community colleges.

Goal 4: Create Apprenticeship, Internship, and Sponsorship Programs for Vocational Students

- **Objective:** Build pathways for high school students to gain hands-on experience and secure stable employment in skilled labor fields before graduating.
- **Action:** Partner with Arizona-based companies to create apprenticeship, internship, and sponsorship opportunities for students in high school vocational programs. Encourage businesses to sponsor students through scholarships, mentorships, and work-based learning experiences.
- **Target Audience:** Arizona businesses, high school students, and educational institutions.

Goal 5: Increase Industry-Specific Certifications and Training Opportunities in High School

- **Objective:** Ensure that Arizona high school students can earn industry-recognized certifications in high-demand fields, providing them with an immediate path to well-paying jobs after graduation.
- **Action:** Develop and implement training programs that offer certifications in areas such as welding, machinery operation, electrical work, healthcare support, and other high-demand trade and vocational fields.
- **Target Audience:** High school students, employers in relevant industries, and local educators.

Goal 6: Advocate for the Value of Skilled Trades Careers in Public Discourse

- **Objective:** Change the cultural narrative around “blue-collar” jobs, emphasizing their importance to economic stability, job creation, and technological progress.
- **Action:** Conduct media campaigns, public events, and community outreach to celebrate the importance of skilled labor in driving Arizona’s economy. Promote success stories of individuals who have pursued vocational education and found fulfilling, well-paid careers.
- **Target Audience:** The general public, parents, students, and policymakers.

Goal 7: Strengthen Collaboration Between Arizona’s Public Education System and Local Employers

- **Objective:** Build a sustainable feedback loop between Arizona’s educational institutions and the private sector to ensure that students are trained in the skills needed by employers today and in the future.
- **Action:** Facilitate regular meetings and partnerships between Arizona schools, community colleges, and employers to ensure educational programs remain responsive to industry needs. This can include advisory boards, employer-driven curriculum updates, and tailored job training programs.

- **Target Audience:** School administrators, private sector employers, and workforce development agencies.

Goal 8: Promote Career Pathways that Include Skilled Labor, Vocational, and Higher Education Tracks

- **Objective:** Create and publicize clear pathways for students to enter vocational, technical, or higher education, while demonstrating that skilled labor is a viable and respected career option.
- **Action:** Develop and promote materials that outline clear, transparent career pathways for students in Arizona that include both vocational and higher education options, highlighting the various avenues for advancement in trades and skilled sectors.
- **Target Audience:** High school students, parents, guidance counselors, and educational institutions.

Goal 9: Address Skilled Labor Shortages by Expanding Workforce Training Opportunities

- **Objective:** Ensure that Arizona has a well-trained, ready workforce to meet the needs of industries critical to the state's growth, including manufacturing, mining, healthcare, and construction.
- **Action:** Collaborate with industry leaders and community colleges to expand training programs that address specific workforce needs in critical sectors. Develop programs that are accessible to a broad demographic, including underserved communities.
- **Target Audience:** Arizona employers, community colleges, job seekers, and workforce development organizations.

Goal 10: Promote the Long-Term Economic Benefits of Investing in Vocational and Skilled Labor Education

- **Objective:** Highlight the economic advantages of building a robust vocational and skilled labor workforce in Arizona, focusing on job creation, workforce readiness, and long-term economic stability.
- **Action:** Conduct research and create reports that show the long-term benefits of investing in vocational education for Arizona's economic growth, particularly in emerging industries like manufacturing, mining, and technology.
- **Target Audience:** Arizona policymakers, businesses, and the general public.

Conclusion

Project Workforce is a strategic initiative aimed at addressing the growing need for skilled labor in Arizona. By rebranding vocational and trade careers as prestigious, high-paying opportunities, and by developing targeted programs and partnerships between high schools, businesses, and community colleges, this initiative will ensure that Arizona's workforce is prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

By focusing on vocational education and hands-on training, **Project Workforce** will help build a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers to support Arizona's economic growth in key sectors, including manufacturing, mining, healthcare, and technology. This initiative is crucial for creating a dynamic workforce that can meet both current and future demand, ultimately ensuring that Arizona remains a competitive and attractive place for business and industry.

PROJECT WORKFORCE

The Canada Arizona Business Council has created Project Workforce as a critical initiative to continue and strategically discuss the one component that makes all the other CABCC's initiatives work, and that is the different levels of the state's labor talent. The universities are full of students wanting a higher education. We all have encouraged kids to go to college and get a degree. When in actuality the past, present and future of America has relied on the undervalued skilled laborers who are trained to build with their hands, run machinery and who are the physical, and often, invisible force behind bringing goods and services to market. They have been down played by higher education messaging. Arizona's public and private sectors are aware that in order to create and maintain a future for mining, foreign direct investment, tourism, technology and healthcare there needs to be a shift in messaging and to encourage students to seek trained and vocational certifications and degrees-and as early as high school.

Business Facilities Online news stated that November 2022 figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show the state ranked first for year over year job growth (8.32%), with more than 15,000 manufacturing jobs added through that month. Arizona also ranks among the top three states for the fastest jobs recovery in manufacturing, adding more than 17,000 jobs since the pre-pandemic peak. America is starting to make things again. Our GDP relies on our exports of goods. With positions burgeoning in trades and vocations, this has become the "growth" category of Arizona's jobs for manufacturing. The discussions need to start by engaging high schools and to re-write the teaching curriculum to not only encourage trades and vocations, but to also retrain this age group's mindset that consuming is good, but building is better. They can be THE solution not part of today's mentality of consuming and not working.

Governing bodies who determine high school curriculums would benefit by seeking the private sector's job fulfillment needs and to give them an opportunity to create specific curriculums and certifications at the high school level that will fulfill their workforce needs. Private companies know exactly what skills and training their employees must have now and when projecting the needs into the future. This educational model can only be determined by companies who know the trends and future of the workforce. Companies can invest in sponsoring students and/or offering scholarships to those who choose a trade or vocation. Students can earn certifications each semester, giving them skilled training for immediate jobs. They can move up through their career and mentor and train the next generation. This model augments the current educational model where students are incurring massive student loan debts, are vying for positions in over saturated fields, and who remain unemployed after graduation.

Arizona's AND America's next level of growth lies in new training and educational messaging. What is relevant to Arizona's growth is the expansion of manufacturing, mining, tourism, healthcare and vocational, trade and other skilled careers are relevant to existing and future Arizona companies that require trained and skilled workers. Workforce fulfillment, along with cost of doing business are the

two major factors in companies wanting to re-locate. Activating this high school future-workforce is going to be key to this growth and expansion.

It begins with updating terminology when referring to blue collar jobs and this segment of the workforce to vocational and trade positions and careers. Re-messaging to the public to honor and respect the workforce who have a different educational background and a high skilled and trained position. Giving more honor and respect to this area not only to the public, but in the eyes of parents and students. These are the high paying jobs of the future. These will be the last careers to be replaced by AI. This is the workforce segment that is the backbone of America. This is the consumer without student debt who can immediately start their career in manufacturing, mining, water augmentation, running heavy equipment, landscape architects, etc. These are the future workers who fly under-the-radar and will be able to purchase homes and begin to invest, sooner than their counterparts who are still looking for jobs in already crowded fields and paying back large student loans.

The balance in the workforce between higher, mid- and trained/vocational education is a discussion that the public and the private sectors need to have. All three levels are and will be needed, however the pipeline of training skilled and advanced manufacturing jobs, is not being sufficiently fed for the anticipated growth in Arizona for the next two decades. Without this segment of workforce there will be a breakdown in the state's economic growth. Discussions on cultivating a skilled and trained workforce, starting in high-school, need to start now. The CABC membership recognizes that the time is now to bring attention to this initiative, Project Workforce.