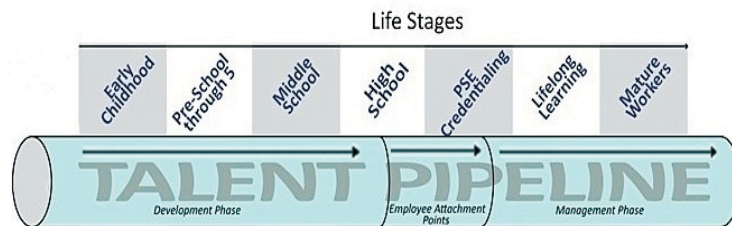


Workforce Readiness

Today, the labor market in America presents a paradox. Although the nation struggles under the weight of stubborn unemployment and historic joblessness, employers widely report difficulty finding qualified and skilled workers. The business community has been concerned about the gap between employers' needs and workers' skills for many years, but anxiety has only grown as a virtual flood of job seekers has failed to bridge the divide.

If businesses are unable to find the right talent in today's economy, what will they do tomorrow—when demographic shifts and other factors are projected to deliver a massive shortfall of American workers? At a time when the frontline

of the baby boom generation has already reached retirement age, the nation's employers will require an exceptional pool of new, young workers to continue the American traditions of innovation and productivity on the global stage. While our economic success will depend more than ever before on the skills of our workforce, the facts are undeniable: Too many of our youth are not prepared to compete and succeed in the workplace of tomorrow.



© 2010 Corporate Voices for Working Families

Corporate Voices for Working Families' workforce readiness initiative spans the talent pipeline and follows the stages of an individual's education, training, and career—starting in early childhood, and continuing through their schooling, employee attachment, and mature worker years. Notably, Corporate Voices has greatly expanded our workforce readiness portfolio to reflect the belief, from our member companies, that employers can and must be active partners in preparing a talent pool of skilled employees, while helping young people succeed in school, on the job, and throughout life.

In recognition of our leadership in this space, we have secured multiple investments, highlighted by these three key workforce readiness initiatives—each of them steps along a talent development pipeline. Distinct but mutually reinforcing, these initiatives provide a range of opportunities for our partner companies to showcase innovative business practices, learn from fellow corporate leaders, participate in research design, and educate policy makers.

Current Initiatives

Postsecondary Education Completion, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: A growing body of research demonstrates that a postsecondary credential is the best path to professional success, particularly for low-income young adults. Partnering with the Gates Foundation to bring the business perspective to the postsecondary completion agenda puts Corporate Voices at the nexus of an issue critical to our corporate partners, current leaders in Washington, and to our nation's continuing economic prosperity—ensuring a skilled talent for a competitive future.

New Options, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation: This important project seeks to develop “enterprising pathways” for out-of-school youth and young adults aged 16 to 24. Enterprising pathways train untapped talent with workplace skills that match workforce needs—providing greater opportunity for employees and employers

alike. In collaboration with Year Up, a model training program for urban youth, we are cultivating senior business leaders to serve as champions among their peers and as messengers to policy makers. Our goal: To help employers view disconnected youth as a valuable economic asset and untapped talent worth investing in.

Ready by 21®, Credentialed by 26, funded by Phillip Morris USA, an Altria Company: Ready by 21® is a set of strategies to help communities improve the odds that more young people will be ready for college, work and life. As the Ready by 21 National Partnership's expert on business and industry, Corporate Voices works with business leaders, both nationally and locally, to invest in workforce readiness as a business imperative. We continue to guide corporate outreach and develop tools and research that assist businesses and communities in articulating solutions for a competitive workforce.

About Corporate Voices

Corporate Voices is the leading national business membership organization shaping conversations and collaborations on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded in 2001, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policy solutions that reflect a commonality of interests among the private sector, government and other stakeholders.

Washington, DC

Phone: 202-467-8130

Fax: 202-467-8140

Blog: corporatevoices.wordpress.com

Twitter: [@corporatevoices](https://twitter.com/corporatevoices)

www.corporatevoices.org

For more information, please contact John-Anthony Meza, Vice President, Workforce Readiness, at jmeza@corporatevoices.org.

Recent Research

- **Across the Great Divide (2011):** Published with Civic Enterprises and other partners, this report examines the perspectives of business and college leaders on the state of America's higher education, the nation's broad skills gap, and what is needed for the United States to be competitive in today's challenging global economy.
- **A Profile of Young Workers (16-26) in Low-Income Families (2011):** This report offers a detailed picture of the challenges young Americans from low-income families face; the struggle to balance the need to work and their education to advance their careers—and the many ways employers can support and assist them in pursuing work and schooling together.
- **From an "Ill Prepared" to a Well-Prepared Workforce (2010):** While the U.S. struggles with high unemployment and joblessness, employers widely report difficulty finding qualified and skilled workers. In this report we explore the imperative for businesses and community colleges to collaborate in an effort to address this skills gap, and highlight the most promising employer-education partnerships.
- **The Ill-Prepared U.S. Workforce (2009):** Corporate Voices, along with several prominent research partners, surveyed employers to explore their on-the-job workforce readiness training initiatives, and whether they were an effective way to address the skills gaps of entry-level employees.
- **Are They Really Ready to Work? (2006):** Corporate Voices and other key research partners surveyed more than 400 employers to better understand their views about new entrants to the workforce. The report documents employers' widespread concerns about a range of basic skills—both academic and applied.

Micro-Business Cases

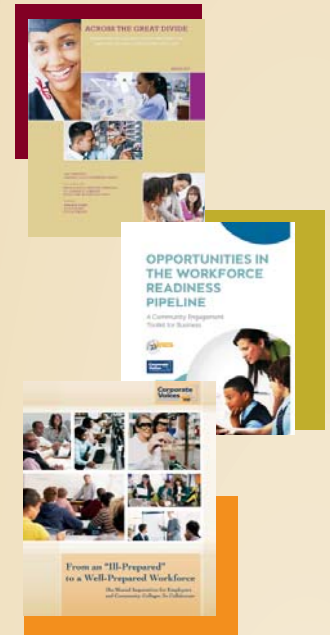
Corporate Voices is also committed to identifying and spotlighting businesses that make significant contributions to education, training, and career opportunities for their own employees. Two distinct series of one-page case studies showcase best practices nationally in workforce development:

- Our Learn and Earn Models series, focused on partnerships between employers and educational institutions to support postsecondary education completion; and
- Our New Options series, focused on model career training programs to develop untapped talent, mainly among low-income young adults.

Public Policy Progress and Priorities

Corporate Voices recognizes the importance of advocating for public policy change to advance our partners' priorities. Corporate Voices has strong, bipartisan relationships in the 112th Congress on Capitol Hill, at the White House, and within the various federal agencies overseeing key workforce issues. Our **ongoing policy advocacy efforts** focus on related priorities of concern to our partners in the business community:

- We worked closely with Congressional staff to secure passage of the **Disconnected Youth Tax Credit**, a 2009-2010 federal credit for companies creating enterprising pathways to hire disconnected youth. Corporate Voices continues to drive federal tax incentives to support employers' efforts to hire, train, and enhance the skills of American workers, with a special focus on the needs of economically disadvantaged young adults and working parents.
- Overhaul of federal education investments, especially under the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act**.
- Renewal and improvements in federal workforce training programs, notably under the federal **Workforce Investment Act**.
- Along with several of our corporate partners, we have been invited to take part in several recent **White House conferences** with President Obama and top officials, including summits on Jobs, Workplace Flexibility, and Community Colleges.
- In partnership with *Working Mother* magazine, we launched the **Best of Congress Award**, given to lawmakers who demonstrate an exemplary commitment to policies supporting working families.



Workforce Readiness' Tools

- Opportunities in the Workforce Readiness Pipeline: A Community Engagement Toolkit for Business
- Supporting the Education Pipeline: Business Engagement Menu for Community-Based Organizations
- Common Goals Unique Strengths: Education and Business Partnership
- Call to Action, Ready by 21 Business Engagement Menu: Increasing Communications Between Business and Community Leaders
- Business Engagement Stakeholders Wheel: Identifying Business Leaders in Your Community

www.corporatevoices.org/our-work/workforce-readiness