



# Strategies for Workforce Recovery in Response to the Current Crisis

**A Resource for Local Leaders**

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# About This Resource

This resource outlines a menu of actionable strategies for local leaders for workforce-related recovery efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and related recession. By “local leaders,” we mean mayoral-level staff, county executive staff, local agency leads, community college leaders, workforce development boards, philanthropies, and business or industry partnerships.

Local areas across the US face varying rates of COVID-19 infection as well as regulations governing reopening. The local industry mix also affects unemployment and business and workforce needs. Some areas are looking for strategies to keep workers connected to their workplaces, help them work from home, and help them access benefits as widespread closures continue. Others are reopening and wanting to help workers develop new skills and search for jobs. As the economy begins to recover but unemployment remains high, some areas may focus on helping new entrants to the labor market and investing in jobs.

These strategies focus on evidence-based interventions from the Great Recession and other research and draw on early experiences in the current economic downturn. Considering the current fiscal crunch, we include strategies that are largely low cost. Although some strategies will be familiar to leaders in the [workforce system](#), this resource may be especially helpful to leaders who focus on other policy areas, providing a high-level “checklist” of strategies for workforce-related recovery efforts.<sup>1</sup>

To help users select and jump to strategies most relevant for them, the following matrix lists the strategies we include, organized by goal and hyperlinked to the corresponding page. The matrix catalogs the key types of action in each strategy using color-coded check marks, as follows:

- **Information:** disseminating existing information or promoting existing programs or services
- **Coordination:** communicating and working together with local nonprofits, employers, or philanthropies to ensure efforts are additive rather than duplicative and funds are targeted
- **New services:** Using existing funding streams in a new way, or crafting and implementing plans to create new services
- **Advocacy:** Encouraging local, state, federal, and/or other organizations to fund existing or new policies or programs

The matrix also shows for which phase the strategy is most pertinent (“widespread closures,” “partial reopening,” or “recovery”) so local leaders can choose useful strategies for their current circumstances. Each strategy entry provides a description, evidence, specific actions for local leaders, and useful examples and resources.

**Matrix of Strategies by Type of Action and Applicable Phase**

| Goal  | Strategy  | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|---|---|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
|   |   | Provide information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Keeping workers connected to jobs                     | Short-time compensation or workshare                                  | ✓                   | ✓          |                    | ✓        | ✓                   |           |          |
|   | Rapid response and layoff aversion                                    | ✓                   | ✓          |                    | ✓        |                     |           |          |
| Providing income and supports for workers not at work | Unemployment insurance  | ✓                   | ✓          |                    |          | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Access to benefits and supports                                       | ✓                   |            | ✓                  | ✓        | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |
| Helping workers find new work                         | Job search  |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Addressing job quality in recovery                                    | ✓                   |            |                    | ✓        |                     |           | ✓        |
| Building skills for a new economy                     | Sector-based skills training  | ✓                   | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Apprenticeships   | ✓                   | ✓          |                    |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Leveraging community colleges   |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
| Improving online access                               | Broadband and digital access  |                     |            | ✓                  | ✓        | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Digital skills  |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |
| Investing in job programs                             | Publicly funded jobs programs   | ✓                   | ✓          | ✓                  | ✓        |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Support for starting small businesses                                 | ✓                   | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
|   | Contact tracing   | ✓                   |            | ✓                  |          | ✓                   | ✓         |          |
| Helping new entrants and reentrants to labor market   | Programs targeting disconnected youth                                 |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     |           | ✓        |
|   | Reentry services for individuals recently released from incarceration |                     | ✓          | ✓                  | ✓        |                     | ✓         | ✓        |

# Promoting Inclusive Recovery

Local areas are facing the dual challenges of keeping people safe and addressing economic needs during a pandemic and recession, both of which have [disproportionately](#) hit communities of color. People from these communities are more likely to

- contract the novel coronavirus and to have poorer subsequent health outcomes,<sup>2</sup>
- be deemed “essential workers” and face higher infection risk,<sup>3</sup> and
- lose their jobs and face economic hardship.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, this is unlike any other recession: the nation faces the possibility of a “[k-shaped](#)” [recovery](#) (meaning some industries continue to be hit hard while others grow), creating both challenges and opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

This resource pulls together information and evidence on strategies for workforce-recovery efforts that promote inclusive recovery. An [inclusive recovery](#) focuses on racial and economic equity, and it occurs when a place overcomes economic distress in a way that provides the opportunity for all residents—especially historically excluded populations—to benefit from and contribute to economic prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

Given how differently the pandemic and recession are affecting outcomes for people of color than for white people (both in health and finances), any recovery must consider a larger context and improve economic and racial equity. Although the recovery from the Great Recession was [deeply inequitable](#), local leaders can take concrete steps today to center equity in COVID-19 recovery strategies.<sup>7</sup> Within each strategy, we identify ways to structure or target actions to counter inequities. But some practices for promoting inclusive recovery cut across strategies; these include engaging affected communities in developing solutions, targeting efforts toward neighborhoods that have been traditionally underserved and hardest hit by the pandemic, and adopting a shared vision of inclusive recovery.

Here we offer some examples and resources that can help local areas address racial inequities and create an inclusive recovery:

- The [Race, Equity and Leadership \(REAL\) Council of the National League of Cities](#) offers examples of cities prioritizing equity in COVID-19 response.<sup>8</sup>
- [This report](#) from Urban Institute outlines ways in which cities can recover from economic distress in a more inclusive manner.<sup>9</sup>
- A [community-led action plan](#) for addressing structural inequity during COVID-19 recovery – the case of South Los Angeles from Brookings Center for Transformative Placemaking.<sup>10</sup>
- How local philanthropy can help address economic inequities: [the example of Fresno, CA](#).<sup>11</sup>
- [Jobs for the Future’s Equitable Recovery Hub provides information and strategies](#).<sup>12</sup>
- [Ten essential questions](#) for workforce development using a racial equity framework from the Associated Black Charities.<sup>13</sup>
- Urban Institute data tool for [measuring economic and racial inclusion](#) in America’s cities.<sup>14</sup>

# Keeping Workers Connected to Jobs

Widespread closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic led to sudden layoffs, some of which are temporary or expected to be temporary. Even after reopening, some places have had to shut down again because of spikes in infections. Unemployment rates vary but remain high in most of the country. Unemployment rates for people of color are even higher. Studies show that keeping workers connected to employers, even while those workers are laid off, reduces unemployment and speeds return to work. Layoff-aversion strategies are designed to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment caused by layoffs. This section discusses some of the actions local leaders can take to keep workers connected to employers during pandemic-related shutdowns.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Short-time compensation or workshare
- Rapid response and layoff aversion

| Keeping workers connected to jobs    |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy                             | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|                                      | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Short-time compensation or workshare | ✓                   | ✓          |                    | ✓        | ✓                   | ✓         |          |
| Rapid response and layoff aversion   | ✓                   | ✓          |                    | ✓        | ✓                   |           |          |

## Strategy: Short-Time Compensation or Workshare

### Description

Short-time Compensation (STC), also referred to as workshare, is an unemployment insurance (UI) program that allows employers to place workers on reduced-hour work schedules while retaining them as employees; at the same time, workers receive partial UI benefits. Currently, 29 states have implemented this program. Employers can use this proactively at the onset of widespread business closures to avoid total layoffs, or as a phased reopening strategy, rehiring some employees as shutdowns are partially lifted. The program has not been widely used in the US in past recessions in part because employers don't know about it and must develop a plan to apply it. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided 100 percent federal funding for up to 26 weeks of STC benefits and provided grants for states to implement, improve, and promote STC programs.

### Evidence

STC programs can reduce layoffs. STC played a key role in mitigating job loss in the Great Recession in [other developed countries](#).<sup>15</sup> In US states where the program operated in the Great Recession, [indirect evidence suggests](#) significant effects in some states' manufacturing sectors.<sup>16</sup> [Outreach efforts to inform employers about the program in two](#) states (before the current recession) were successful in increasing awareness and take-up.<sup>17</sup>

### Action

In states that have STC programs, local government leaders can **provide information** to employers on this option to avert layoffs and potentially bring back workers in a phased reopening. Workforce staff can **coordinate** with partners (employers and employer groups) to recruit employers and help them apply and meet state requirements. In some states, local governments may be able to use STC programs to avoid layoffs of public workers. For states without an STC program, local government, employer, and philanthropy leaders can **advocate** their state legislature to start an STC program, leveraging CARES Act funding.

### Examples and Resources

- The National Governor's Association [provides](#) some examples of states using STC during the current crisis, such as Virginia starting a new program, Rhode Island increasing marketing to employers, and Michigan using the program in the public sector at the state and local levels.
- Learn more from US Department of Labor about the [STC](#) program and state contacts. And see [US Department of Labor guidance](#) on \$100M of STC grant funds for states under the CARES Act.



# Strategy: Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion

## Description

Layoff aversion funds are being used during the pandemic to provide aid to employers to help them keep workers employed. Although the federally funded Paycheck Protection Program is now closed, some states continue to operate layoff aversion funds. In addition, the Rapid Response program carried out by state and local workforce systems in partnership with the US Department of Labor typically provides aid and reemployment services to businesses and workers in response to layoffs and plant closings, but it can also provide assistance and services to avert layoffs. In years before the COVID-19 pandemic, this included information and assistance on state tax policy, loans, and how to build networks and develop tools to help avoid business failures. As shutdowns continue or businesses slowly reopen, layoff aversion funds and Rapid Response teams can provide other layoff-aversion services to save jobs.

## Evidence

In general, studies show that keeping workers connected to jobs even while they are laid off reduces the length of unemployment and speeds return to work. [Experience demonstrates](#) that early intervention by a Rapid Response Team increases worker reemployment.<sup>18</sup>

## Action

Local government leaders can **provide information** to local employers about what layoff aversion funding is available and for what purposes. Local leaders can **coordinate** with employer partners (such as employer associations, industry partnerships, and individual employers) on strategic uses of government funds to avert layoffs. Given limits in these resources, local government leaders may give primary consideration to contacting and working with employers with lower-wage workers to promote inclusive recovery. Local government, business and philanthropic leaders can **advocate** for additional state and federal layoff aversion funds.

## Examples and Resources

- [Oregon guidance](#) on examples for flexible use of layoff aversion funding during pandemic, including purchasing remote access equipment or cleaning and sanitation supplies.
- [CareerSource South Florida announced a COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund](#) to provide support to small businesses and/or community-based organizations within Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties facing financial impacts and potential layoffs from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Learn more about the [Rapid Response program](#). Each state has their own plan and coordinator (find the list [here](#)) and this [practitioners guide to Rapid Response](#) has a section on layoff aversion.

# Providing Income and Supports for Workers Not at Work

The loss of jobs from the pandemic affects workers’ ability to meet their families’ basic needs. Depending on the length of the recession and changes in demand in particular sectors, workers may be out of work for some time. Helping workers access safety-net programs is critical during a recession, but given the number of workers facing job losses, many may be unfamiliar with these benefit programs and not know how to access them.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Unemployment insurance
- Access to benefits and supports

| Providing income and supports for workers not at work |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|---|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy  | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|   | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Unemployment insurance                                | ✓                   | ✓          |                    |          | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |
| Access to benefits and supports                       | ✓                   |            | ✓                  | ✓        | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |

## Strategy: Unemployment Insurance

### Description

UI provides benefits to eligible workers who lose their jobs. This state-federal program has complicated eligibility rules that vary by state. At the beginning of the pandemic, Congress provided additional funds to both increase number of weeks and benefits per week under the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program and funded benefits for workers who are not usually eligible for UI under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, including those who are independent contractors or self-employed. UI agencies needed to develop new application procedures for PUA even as they were flooded with applications for both programs, which created challenges for access and confusion among some UI beneficiaries about their options.

### Evidence

UI is one of the most important benefits available to workers and their families during a recession. [Evidence from the Great Recession](#) indicates that the UI program effectively increased household income and prevented material hardship.<sup>19</sup> In the depths of that recession, UI is [estimated to have kept more than 3 million people out of poverty each year](#), including nearly 1 million children.<sup>20</sup>

### Action

Local government leaders can **provide clear information** to those out of work about how to apply for UI and who is eligible, especially for PUA, according to their state rules. Although many states have FAQ web pages, local government leaders can **coordinate** with local community and philanthropic leaders to ensure informational resources and training is provided to local social-service agency and community-based organization staff who regularly interact with those who need benefits. These organizations, including those serving immigrant, non-English-speaking, or economically distressed neighborhoods, are often trusted intermediaries to historically underserved groups. In promoting UI availability, local leaders can promote economic and racial equity by ensuring that disadvantaged communities and neighborhoods are targeted.

### Examples and Resources

- [California state FAQ for PUA](#).<sup>21</sup>
- [Seattle](#) answers questions about different UI COVID-19 scenarios and benefit eligibility.
- [Unemployment program FAQ from the National Employment Law Project](#).
- [US DOL PUA during COVID-19 informational page](#).

## Strategy: Access to Benefits and Supports

### Description

During this pandemic-related recession, unemployed or underemployed people may be unfamiliar with publicly available benefits and supports, including subsidized child care, transportation assistance, nutritional assistance and food banks, eviction avoidance and rental assistance, and help with home utilities. These publicly funded programs can help more people in need, including those who are unemployed.

### Evidence

Currently, [nearly one in three adults](#) are having trouble paying expenses.<sup>22</sup> During the Great Recession, many people who lost their jobs [were helped by benefits](#) such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, but some families that were eligible didn't receive benefits.<sup>23</sup> American Job Centers are crucial in connecting unemployed people to work supports, [such as child care](#) and transportation assistance to get to training or work.<sup>24</sup> Further, [evidence](#) suggests that simplifying and aligning program policies, as well as providing targeted [guidance](#), can improve access to these benefits.<sup>25</sup>

### Action

Local government leaders and philanthropies can **provide information** about available benefits to nonprofit service and community organizations, especially those serving communities of color disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and recession. Local nonprofit and philanthropic leaders can solicit input from these communities about existing unmet needs and barriers to accessing benefits and **advocate** for new state and federal funding and policies to address issues, such as direct stimulus payments and eviction moratoriums. Local agency leaders and service providers can implement **new** small, low-cost changes in how **services** are accessed or delivered to improve efficiency and get people benefits faster. Philanthropy can support efforts to streamline benefits access and can fund and/or coordinate emergency response efforts.

### Examples and Resources

- American Job Centers can assess and [provide assistance with child care needs](#) or other supportive service needs.
- Several other organizations and initiatives have focused on streamlining benefits access, including through the [Benefits Data Trust](#), [Earn Benefits Online](#), and [Single Stop USA](#).
- [Philanthropy Colorado](#) is coordinating to connect funders across the state to provide relief funds and resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The [Seattle Foundation manages a COVID-19 Response Fund](#). Formed by a coalition of philanthropy, government, and business, the fund makes grants to community-based organizations.
- The [Work Support Strategies Initiative](#) and this Center on Budget and Priority Priorities [report](#), offer strategies for simplifying and aligning policies, programs activities, and requirements.

# Helping Workers Find New Work

As local areas face job losses from government-imposed shutdowns and the continuing effects during reopening, those who lost their jobs are looking for new work. Some workers temporarily lost jobs when the service, entertainment, and hospitality sectors closed down because of regulations in response to the pandemic, and some continue to be out of work during reopening phases because demand is low in sectors where public concerns about the pandemic remain. Many workers will need new jobs. For workers who had been earning a low wage, their period of unemployment and benefit receipt may be a good time to boost basic skills to prepare to find a higher-paying job or further build skills. To promote racial equity and an inclusive recovery, local areas should address job quality in all recovery efforts to help workers find jobs.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Job search
- Addressing job quality in recovery

| Helping workers find new work      |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy                           | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|                                    | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Job search                         |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
| Addressing job quality in recovery | ✓                   |            |                    | ✓        |                     |           | ✓        |

## Strategy: Job Search

### Description

Local workforce systems can play an important role in helping people find jobs, providing job-search services including resume preparation, job coaching, and placement services funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and provided through American Job Centers. Another avenue for UI claimants is to use the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. RESEA requires one-on-one meetings between UI claimants and program staff and provides job-search services. The pandemic has necessitated changes to both programs. All states initially dropped or reduced job-search requirements for UI beneficiaries because of health risks and lockdowns. As communities reopen, some states are bringing work requirements and services back for UI recipients. Workforce systems are developing ways to provide job-search assistance remotely or with social distance, balancing the need for safety and for people to return to work.

### Evidence

[Studies suggest](#) the [Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment program](#) (the predecessor to RESEA) was effective at promoting reemployment among UI claimants.<sup>26</sup> During the Great Recession, the program reduced the duration of UI claims and had some positive effects on employment and earnings. Similarly, individualized assistance with job searches provided under the Workforce Investment Act, which preceded WIOA, was [also effective](#) in increasing earnings and access to jobs.<sup>27</sup>

### Action

Local leaders can use RESEA or WIOA funding to target those most in need of reemployment services and, within eligibility criteria, use these funds to improve racial and economic equity. Local governments can work to develop and support **new services** that are safe for users, such as online or socially distanced services. Areas experiencing more extensive shutdowns can help unemployed prepare and plan to search for jobs, potentially in new sectors that are less hard hit by the pandemic. Local government leaders can **coordinate** with local employers to encourage participation in virtual job fairs.

### Examples and Resources

- See examples of resources for remote job search in [Minnesota](#) and an example of RESEA services being provided remotely in [New Jersey](#).
- Here is a [fact sheet](#) on RESEA from the US Department of Labor.

# Strategy: Addressing Job Quality in Recovery

## Description

Some experts suggest we should [learn](#) from the response to the Great Recession, arguing that those workforce system recovery efforts did not focus enough on job quality and left workers especially vulnerable for the pandemic.<sup>28</sup> Many “essential” workers, who are disproportionately people of color and immigrants, face increased risks of infection but [do not have basic job benefits](#) such as health insurance or paid leave. Many state and local leaders have taken steps to set and enforce pandemic-related work-safety standards for public and private workers.<sup>29</sup> Local leaders can also take concrete steps now to address job quality, and more equitable access to quality jobs, in pandemic-recovery strategies.

## Evidence

[Evidence](#) suggests elements of job quality are related to improvements in worker well-being.<sup>30</sup> Higher wages, better health, retirement and paid-leave benefits, stable hours and scheduling, and safer and less discriminatory working conditions improve workers’ economic situation, their subjective well-being, their physical and mental health, and even their children’s outcomes.

## Actions

Local government leaders can work with labor leaders and industry partners to create and **advocate** for new policies that set and enforce minimum safety standards for workers at risk of exposure. Local workforce agency, nonprofit, and business leaders can **provide information** to make sure workers and employers know their rights and responsibilities regarding paid leave under circumstances caused by the pandemic and the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (which is currently set to expire December 31, 2020).<sup>31</sup> While using any strategy that provides workforce services to employers, workforce system leaders can prioritize employers that meet a locally set minimum standard for quality jobs. Local government, business, philanthropic, and other community leaders can continue to **advocate** for changes to local, state, or federal changes in policies that improve job quality, such as minimum wage or living-wage laws, paid-leave laws, and improvements in labor standards and enforcement.

## Examples and Resources

- [Austin, Texas](#), leaders use business incentives to promote growth of jobs that meet minimum quality standards, such as paying a living wage and offering opportunities to local residents.
- [NYC resource](#) for employers and employees on workplace laws during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- DC continues to increase [living wage and minimum wage](#) during the pandemic to \$15 an hour.
- Aspen Institute’s [Job Quality Tools Library for Workforce Development](#) provides [valuable resources](#).
- This [resource](#) from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions presents information and evidence on what a quality job looks like.

# Building Skills for a New Economy

As economies emerge from widespread shutdowns, not all sectors will recover at the same pace. Although some temporarily laid-off workers are returning to work, sectors such as entertainment, hospitality, and travel continue to struggle as some restrictions continue and widespread health concerns remain. However, some sectors are already seeing growth, including technology, retail (particularly online), and health care. People of color are **overrepresented** in these hard-hit sectors, which also have a disproportionate share of low-wage jobs.<sup>32</sup> For unemployed workers, seeking jobs in new sectors can be a strategy for economic mobility. Local areas can help workers gain skills now to prepare for the new economy.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Sector-based skills training
- Apprenticeships
- Leveraging community colleges

| Building skills for a new economy |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy                          | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|                                   | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Sector-based skills training      | ✓                   | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
| Apprenticeships                   | ✓                   | ✓          |                    |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
| Leveraging community colleges     |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |



# Strategy: Sector-Based Skills Training

## Description

Business experts [suggest](#) that reskilling workers is key to emerging stronger from this crisis; local workforce systems play an important role in doing this.<sup>33</sup> Publicly funded American Job Centers and privately funded employment programs offer employment counseling to help individuals explore options to move into new sectors or occupations, pay for training to learn the skills needed for in-demand jobs, and provide connections to services to support those in training. Some sector-based training programs are being delivered in a different way during the pandemic to address health risks. Funds can be targeted to help workers change sectors and move up from low-wage to higher-wage jobs. Some workforce boards are using CARES Act funds to promote training in the growing information technology and health care sectors by paying tuition and offering stipends, emergency assistance, child care support, and computers for remote learning.

## Evidence

[Studies find](#) that the most effective job trainings are connected directly to in-demand sectors rather than stand-alone trainings not aligned with employer needs.<sup>34</sup> This research also suggests that those who receive employment coaching to help select training fare better than those who don't.

## Action

Local workforce agency leads and workforce development boards should leverage federal, state, local government and private and philanthropic funding to provide training for jobs in growth sectors. These efforts can be part of an inclusive recovery by **providing information** to and actively recruiting residents of economically hard-hit communities of color, and making sure support services are in place. Local program leaders can create **new service** models that allow for remote access to training (see Improving Online Access). **Coordinating** with partners, including business groups and employers in growing industries, will ensure training is aligned with employer needs and help connect new trainees to jobs.

## Examples and Resources

- Examples of use of CARES Act funds from [Cobb County, Georgia](#), and [Rochester, New York](#).
- The [Sacramento, CA, City Council](#) approved a \$10M Workforce Development Recovery program to retrain and upskill those who have lost jobs, with a focus on equity and inclusion.
- JVS Boston, a community organization, lays out [actions for workforce providers](#) during the pandemic.
- Harvard's Malcolm Weiner School for Social Policy put together this list of workforce and labor market [resources](#) during COVID-19.
- This Brookings [report](#), *Training during and after COVID-19*, addresses changes in training.

## Strategy: Apprenticeships

### Description

Apprenticeships combine classroom learning with paid on-the-job training and mentorship from an employer and provide an industry-recognized credential upon completion. Over the past five years, the US Department of Labor has invested more than \$300 million in expanding or creating apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships are growing beyond traditional construction and manufacturing fields in industries including health care, information technology, and commerce, and many continue to run during the pandemic. The Department of Labor promotes diversity and inclusion across race and gender in apprenticeship through grant programs. Apprenticeship in sectors less affected by the current pandemic and recession can be an important avenue for unemployed people to gain new skills.

### Evidence

[Research shows](#) that those who complete apprenticeships earn substantially more over their lifetime than those who don't.<sup>35</sup> [Research also shows employers of apprentices](#) benefit from the reliable talent pipeline, increased worker productivity, and reduced turnover.<sup>36</sup> [One study found](#) that an effort to support apprenticeship programs in recruiting, training, and retaining women in traditionally male-dominated occupations substantially increased women's employment in these occupations.<sup>37</sup>

### Action

Local government, workforce system, philanthropic, and business leaders can promote apprenticeships by providing **information** to and encouraging employers, employer groups, and community colleges to participate in apprenticeship programs. These leaders can **coordinate** with state and local entities that are already promoting and sponsoring apprenticeships. Local leaders should encourage employers and apprenticeship partners to actively recruit women and people of color to promote equity.

### Examples and Resources

- [Apprenticeship South Carolina](#) is an effort to expand apprenticeship and support employers to offer programs, leading to over 30,000 apprentices with over 1,000 registered programs.
- [California Apprenticeship Initiative](#), an effort of the Foundation for California Community Colleges, supports the development of new apprenticeships.
- The [Office of Apprenticeship](#) discusses how employers can benefit from diversity and inclusion in apprenticeships.
- Here is a [contact list](#) for state apprenticeship agencies.

## Strategy: Leveraging Community Colleges

### Description

Community colleges are major providers of education and training to diverse student bodies. They can be nimble partners in developing career-focused training that is responsive to, and often developed in partnership with, employers. After the Great Recession, community colleges played an important role in providing training to workers who had lost their jobs. Community colleges have developed innovations to accelerate learning, support students' persistence and completion, and connect students to the workforce. This positions community colleges to be responsive to the needs of the workforce and employers as the country emerges from the current recession.

### Evidence

Community colleges are well positioned to serve as engines of economic mobility because they enroll high numbers of students facing challenges to completion; 29 percent of community college students are first-generation college students and 31 percent come from low-income households. Research suggests that community college attendance yields economic returns and can contribute to upward mobility.<sup>38</sup>

### Action

Local government leaders can work directly with community colleges to develop and support **new services** that are responsive to employer and student needs while communities reopen and recover and that build on what is known about effective program delivery. Local philanthropy can support these programs by providing additional resources. Local community leaders can **coordinate** with these partners to ensure input from communities hardest hit by the pandemic about how best to meet needs. Community colleges should track outcomes by race, gender, ethnicity, and income and implement strategies and supports aimed at achieving equitable outcomes.

### Examples and Resources

- North Idaho College [effectively leveraged industry relationships](#) to ensure a connection to the field in their aerospace training program, which uses industry employees as adjunct instructors.
- City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) [requires students to attend](#) college full time and take developmental education courses early to graduate in three years. The program was effective in more than doubling graduation rates for participating students.
- Learn more about strategies community colleges can take to change systems [from this Urban Institute resource](#).

# Improving Online Access

The COVID-19 pandemic made many in-person activities unsafe, pushing many aspects of our lives online. These include work, job searches, education and training, and applications for public benefits. Regardless of where an individual may be in terms of looking for or retaining a job, broadband access, the digital skills necessary to navigate and succeed online, and the availability of computers and/or smartphones are more important than ever.

Local leaders can use public dollars to purchase and distribute computers and wireless internet routers or to expand employment-related services online or at public locations, such as libraries or American Job Centers, when they reopen. Local leaders can ensure that target audiences have the digital skills training to access services that are increasingly online.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Broadband and digital access
- Digital skills

| Building skills for a new economy |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy                          | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|                                   | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Broadband and digital access      |                     |            | ✓                  | ✓        | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |
| Digital Skills                    |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          | ✓                   | ✓         | ✓        |

## Strategy: Broadband and Digital Access

### Description

Access to broadband, Wi-Fi, and digital devices is critical for an increasing number of activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery, individuals must have access to the internet to search and apply for jobs, participate in training and education, and connect to services. In 2019, the [Federal Communications Commission](#) estimated that 21 million Americans lacked broadband access; other sources put that number as high as 162 million.<sup>39</sup> With the pandemic migrating many services online, these individuals are in dire need of digital devices and reliable broadband connections.

### Evidence

A lack of broadband access [stymies](#) one's ability to search and apply for jobs, and now, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to find and participate in training and education opportunities.<sup>40</sup> But many Americans, particularly those who are black, indigenous, or other people of color or who live in rural areas, [face heightened barriers](#) to accessing the internet and the devices needed to navigate it.<sup>41</sup>

### Action

Local government leaders can engage in **advocacy** for expanding broadband access. They could create a “lifeline broadband” program, modeled after the federal lifeline program for phone access, that would extend free broadband access to low-income pandemic-affected households.<sup>42</sup> Local leaders can also leverage available funding sources such as the CARES Act, which includes \$50 million in funding to promote digital equity and access. Local government leaders can also provide **new services**, such as computer and/or WiFi hot spot loaning programs.

### Examples and Resources

- The [Seattle Public Library](#) is loaning Wi-Fi hot spots to connect communities during the pandemic.
- [New York City's master plan](#) to expand broadband access.
- Boston's effort to [expand broadband access](#) and the digital equity fund.
- [Sacramento, CA, City Council](#) approved \$750,000 to implement a Digital Equity Response program to provide technology.
- [Digital Inclusion](#) trailblazer communities.
- [Next Century Cities toolkit](#) for becoming broadband ready.
- Pew Trusts piece depicting how states are [expanding broadband](#) access for unserved communities.

## Strategy: Digital Skills

### Description

Many Americans lack adequate digital skills to search for jobs, submit applications, and navigate training and education. With the COVID-19 pandemic pushing so many services online, digital skills are more important than ever. Local leaders can play an important role in addressing digital skill gaps by supporting education and training to help fill the digital divide.

### Evidence

Before the pandemic, [research suggested](#) that an increasing number of jobs ranging in skill level and sector required some digital skills.<sup>43</sup> Digital skills are also necessary for job searches and applications as well as access to online education and training. But many Americans lack such skills: [some estimate](#) that over 15 percent of Americans lack basic digital skills, and disproportionate numbers of them are older, have low incomes, live in rural areas, or are people of color.<sup>44</sup>

### Action

Local workforce leaders, including agency administrators and workforce development boards, can encourage or require local providers to use WIOA Title II funds for **new services** like digital skill and digital literacy training. Local workforce leaders can also **coordinate** with digital skill training providers, other educational and jobs programs, and local schools and libraries to ensure that job seekers have the baseline level of digital literacy necessary for today's market. Local government leaders can ensure that digital-skill training efforts target populations with disproportionately low levels of digital skills, including those with less educational attainment and limited English proficiency and who have had less access to broadband and online digital tools.

### Examples and Resources

- [AARP](#) provides digital training for seniors in communities.
- [Microsoft launches initiative](#) to close digital gap in the COVID-19 pandemic economy.
- Seattle-based [Digital Skills for All](#) program.
- Pew Trusts research on [understanding the digital readiness](#) gap.
- The National Skills Coalition's [State Policy COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#) includes several pandemic-specific approaches to closing the digital skills gap.<sup>45</sup>

# Investing in Jobs Programs

In addition to assisting people in finding jobs and providing training for jobs, government can create job openings or help people create their own jobs. Governments create jobs by investing in public projects, hiring directly, and contracting, but other strategies can be helpful in a recession as well. Strategies can target workers who face one or more significant barriers to employment and thus have an even tougher time finding work during a recession.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Publicly funded jobs programs
- Support for starting small businesses
- Contact tracing

| Investing in job programs             |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy                              | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|                                       | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Publicly funded jobs programs         | ✓                   | ✓          | ✓                  | ✓        |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
| Support for starting small businesses | ✓                   | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     | ✓         | ✓        |
| Contact tracing                       | ✓                   |            | ✓                  |          | ✓                   | ✓         |          |

## Strategy: Publicly Funded Jobs Programs

### Description

Subsidized employment programs can increase employment and boost income for the unemployed. These programs offer subsidies to third-party employers (public, nonprofit, or for profit) who in turn provide jobs to eligible workers. The subsidy is often time-limited, but the expectation is that the job mimics unsubsidized employment (in job expectations and pay). Implementing a program during a recession can help employers as well as employees. In some cases, subsidized jobs with private employers turn into permanent jobs. During the Great Recession, state and local programs were created with federal funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Although new federal funding has not been approved, preparing to implement a program quickly if funds are approved can help leverage this funding for the best outcomes.

### Evidence

[Studies show](#) that subsidized jobs programs can increase short-term and, in some cases, long-term employment and earnings.<sup>46</sup> [Research on ARRA programs](#) finds that employers retained more than one-third of employees after the subsidy ended.<sup>47</sup> A [recent evaluation](#) of 13 subsidized job programs finds that almost all improved employment and earnings in the first year after enrollment, about half maintained those impacts through the second year, and 4 kept them beyond the second year.<sup>48</sup>

### Action

Local government leaders can **coordinate** with potential program leaders begin planning to provide **new services** such as subsidized job programs. Local government leaders can also **advocate** for funding to support the implementation of subsidized jobs programs. Once developed, an **information** campaign may be needed to educate employers and workers about the program. Local workforce leaders can take steps to ensure that subsidized jobs programs prioritize recruitment of job seekers of color and from neighborhoods that have historically experienced underinvestment. Programs can also prioritize other in-need populations, such as those who last worked in a declining industry.

### Examples and Resources

- [Florida's program under ARRA](#) reached out to employers who already expressed interest in publicly funded on-the-job training, hastening program startup and participation.
- This Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality [resource](#) discusses pros and cons of different program design aspects.
- A [Boston Medical Center-led initiative](#) won \$5M in funding from JPMorgan Chase to help high poverty neighborhoods during the COVID-19 recovery.



## Strategy: Support for Starting Small Businesses

### Description

Starting a business is extremely challenging: about half fail after just five years. A period of unemployment can be a good time for would-be entrepreneurs to plan and gain skills. Many cities have established funds to support local business start-ups and [entrepreneurs of color](#), funded in part by philanthropy.<sup>49</sup> Local government leaders connect aspiring entrepreneurs to business counseling and training in areas such as legal issues, bookkeeping, funding, and business planning. One source of funds for entrepreneurs is the Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) program, an optional state program using UI funds that currently operates in Delaware, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, and Oregon.

### Evidence

[Studies](#) show that entrepreneurship by people of color can be a wealth-building and job-creation strategy, but businesses started by people of color and women have lower success rates. Programs supporting small-business development can have positive effects on success rates. [A study of a US Department of Labor project](#) providing self-employment services at American Job Centers found this assistance had a larger effect on successful business starts when people were receiving UI.<sup>50</sup> [Some SEA programs](#) used funds to remunerate program partners, which helped improve services and support program longevity.<sup>51</sup>

### Action

Local government leaders can promote programs and services through entities that support small businesses, including **coordination** with American Jobs Centers (potentially using SEA funds) to help individuals, particularly people of color and women, prepare for starting a small business. They also can promote, **provide information** to, and build partnerships with entities (public and private) that may provide **new services** such as small-business startup funds. Local government leaders can ensure that any new funding is targeted to people of color and women.

### Examples and Resources:

- Chicago, IL, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, [announced \\$500,000](#) for [regional business centers](#) to further support local small businesses, particularly entrepreneurs of color.
- An Ascend 2020 [report](#) on helping entrepreneurs of color grow their businesses.
- This Association for Enterprise Opportunity [report](#) provides ideas for supporting black business ownership.

## Strategy: Contact Tracing

### Description

The pandemic has created an urgent need for public health workers and shone a light on the impact of disinvestment in public health over the past decades, especially in [communities of color](#).<sup>52</sup> In particular, the nation needs contact tracers, individuals who work to identify and contact potentially infected individuals and provide information on next steps to slow the spread of COVID-19. These new jobs are an opportunity to train people from communities most affected by the virus not only as contact tracers but for a longer-term career pathway as community health workers or other frontline health professionals. Local government leaders can fund and promote training programs and contribute to an inclusive recovery by ensuring such programs put individuals on career pathways.

### Evidence

Public health professionals argue for the need to build up a coordinated [public health response in testing and contact tracing](#) to control the spread of the novel coronavirus.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, [research](#) has shown that community health workers from the economically disadvantaged communities most in need of these services can increase economic mobility for workers while improving health outcomes.<sup>54</sup> Considering contact tracing as a step on a career pathway can help ensure an inclusive recovery.

### Action

Local government leaders can use funds allocated for contact tracing training programs to target, through promotion and shared **information**, the hiring and training of individuals from heavily affected communities. Training for contact tracing will be a **new service** but should be embedded in a broader program that creates a career pathway in public health.

### Examples and Resources

- [Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership \(CCWP\) received a \\$56M](#) grant from the city to create 600 contact training jobs.
- UC San Francisco's [public health workforce training partnership](#) with the California Department of Public Health to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Detroit announces Community Health Corp](#) to provide job training and services to community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Baltimore City creates the [Baltimore Health Corps](#) training trusted community members to do contact tracing and beyond.
- [PHI promotes training](#) for contact tracers to telehealth coordinators.
- [The CDC is funding training](#) for contact tracers.

# Helping New Entrants and Reentrants to Labor Market

New labor market entrants (including young adults and recent graduates) and reentrants (including individuals recently released from prison) face a difficult job market. They are competing with other recently laid-off workers who may have more experience, and some are facing employment challenges even in a good economy. Programs and services targeted to specific groups of workers can help workers find jobs and reduce the length of their unemployment.

Strategies in this category include the following:

- Programs targeting disconnected youth
- Reentry services for individuals recently released from incarceration

| Helping new entrants and reentrants to labor market                   |                     |            |                    |          |                     |           |          |
|---|---------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Strategy  | Action              |            |                    |          | Phase for Focus     |           |          |
|   | Provide Information | Coordinate | Offer new services | Advocate | Widespread closures | Reopening | Recovery |
| Programs targeting disconnected youth                                 |                     | ✓          | ✓                  |          |                     |           | ✓        |
| Reentry services for individuals recently released from incarceration |                     | ✓          | ✓                  | ✓        |                     | ✓         | ✓        |

## Strategy: Programs Targeting Disconnected Youth

### Description

Youth who are disconnected or at risk of disconnection (not in school and not employed) are an important population to target during a recession. One key problem following the Great Recession was its “jobless” recovery; the economy improved, but many jobs did not return. Young adults, particularly Black and Latinx youth, felt disproportionate impacts from the jobless recovery.<sup>55</sup> Strategies targeting these youth include career exploration, career-focused training, subsidized employment, apprenticeships, mentoring, summer jobs, and other types of work-based learning.

### Evidence

[Experience shows](#) that “relentless outreach” is an effective means of recruiting difficult-to-reach youth because it meets youth where they are and aims to build trust and rapport.<sup>56</sup> Using trusted mentors from the communities where youth live is [a proven strategy for](#) building trust and encouraging persistence.<sup>57</sup> For career-focused programs, engaging employers is key. And [a growing body of research](#) finds evidence that summer youth employment programs increase youth employment in the short term and decrease negative outcomes, such as the likelihood of incarceration.<sup>58</sup>

### Action

Government and philanthropic leaders can develop **new services** via “earn and learn” opportunities during the school year or summer, including the Summer Youth Employment Program. Programs can be adapted to allow for remote delivery of services. Local philanthropy can support programs that use relentless outreach efforts, mentorship, and provide stipends or opportunities for youth to earn to support disconnected youth persist through programs. Local government leaders can make sure youth programs include these components and target youth of color and from neighborhoods with historical underinvestment. Local workforce and philanthropic leaders can help **coordinate** with business leaders to participate in programs for disconnected youth.

### Examples and Resources

- [Year Up](#) serves urban young adults ages 18 to 24 and offers training and stipends.
- [The Black Male Initiative](#) at City University of New York provides academic and social support for students underrepresented in higher education.
- [Exalt](#), a program in NYC, helps court-involved youth with education and internships, has [moved to a fully virtual model](#) during pandemic.
- The [Illinois Department of Human Services \(IDHS\) COVID-19 Summer Youth Employment Program \(C-SYEP\)](#), though state-run, is an example of providing new services in response to COVID that target disconnected youth.
- These Urban Institute reports explore [approaches to increase economic opportunity for young men of color](#) and [how summer youth employment programs can engage employers](#).
- [Youth.gov resource](#) summarizes strategies for communities to support youth over the summer.

## Strategy: Reentry Services for Individuals Recently Released from Incarceration

### Description

Individuals released from incarceration face barriers to finding work, and those are exacerbated by the current crisis. Because many states are releasing incarcerated people out of pandemic-related safety concerns, reentry services, which provide supports, are especially crucial. Training programs can include vocational training, apprenticeship, or pre-apprenticeship, and in some cases that training can begin while individuals are still incarcerated. Transitional jobs offer temporary subsidized jobs with support services and job placement. Other reentry programs offer wraparound supports and job-search assistance and can help returning citizens leverage skills they may have gained while working in prison.

### Evidence

[Experience demonstrates](#) that education and training within the prison system and [structured transitional jobs programs](#) reduce recidivism and increase employment.<sup>59</sup> [Other research](#) finds that transitional jobs offer meaningful work that offers opportunities to build skills and earn a wage.<sup>60</sup>

### Action

Targeting people recently released from incarceration, who are disproportionately from communities of color and face barriers to employment, is part of promoting an inclusive recovery. Local government leaders should **coordinate** with jails and prisons, nonprofits serving justice-involved people, and employers interested in offering subsidized jobs. Local workforce leaders can **advocate** for apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs to enlist incarcerated individuals nearing their time of release, and leaders can utilize available funding to support **new services** and to ensure workforce development efforts include justice-system outreach. Lastly, local government leaders can encourage employers to hire those with criminal records.

### Examples and Resources

- In Jackson, Mississippi, the nonprofit [New Way Mississippi](#) collaborates with a city employment assistance program, [Jobs for Jacksonians](#), to connect citizens returning from incarceration to jobs. During the pandemic, the program has [adapted its service delivery](#)
- In September 2020, a Charlotte, North Carolina based organization, [GreenLight Fund Charlotte](#), [announced an investment](#) in the New York based nonprofit [Center for Employment Opportunities \(CEO\)](#) to expand their Charlotte job site to provide job training, placement, and retention services to an estimated 800 individuals returning from incarceration by 2024.
- [This RAND report discusses available](#) mechanisms for incentivizing employers to hire individuals with justice system records.
- [The Council of State Governments “What Works in Re-Entry Clearinghouse” page](#) includes many examples of evidence-based reentry programs across the country.

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