

CLOSING THE SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITY GAPS

New Democrat Coalition Future of Work Task Force

The nature of work and the economy is changing. New jobs are being created, triggering a demand for tech skills across industries and disrupting and shrinking traditional middle-skill jobs. Technology matters more than ever. Many employers are unable to find enough qualified candidates to fill positions in emerging and growing industries. Key drivers of this disparity are both the skills gap and the opportunity gap.

The New Democrat Coalition has identified several key challenges that are widening the skills and opportunities gaps.

KEY CHALLENGES WIDENING THE SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES GAPS

Workers in certain industries and segments of the workforce are more vulnerable to disruption from technology.

Many businesses are having difficulty finding qualified workers.

Existing models of education are not meeting the needs of modern students and workers.

PRINCIPLES FOR EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHANGING ECONOMY

Give every American access to the tools to succeed in the 21st century economy

Remove obstacles for Americans to access middle-skill jobs and close the opportunity gap

Create a culture of lifelong learning and make it easier for workers to invest in their future

POLICY ACTION PLAN TO GIVE AMERICANS THE TOOLS TO COMPETE IN THE CHANGING ECONOMY

Give every American access to the tools to succeed in the 21st century economy

- Provide students and workers with universal basic skills
- Invest in STEM education and “soft skills”
- Provide work-based learning during high school
- Invest in and modernize career training programs at the federal, state, and local levels
- Reorient postsecondary education to prepare workers with career-ready skills;
- Invest in apprenticeships

Remove obstacles for Americans to access middle-skill jobs and close the opportunity gap

- Expand competency-based hiring
- Accelerate the deployment of nationally-recognized credentialing standards
- Expand the pool of eligible workers: Provide a fresh start and value potential; Protect worker’s ability to earn; Enable access to work



Create a culture of lifelong learning and make it easier for Americans to invest in their future

- Reform federal worker dislocation programs
- Make upskilling and going back to school easier
- Incentivize employers to invest in worker upskilling
- Provide more financial aid for education for students and workers
- Support and encourage new ways to finance education
- Make higher education more effective and accountable