



National Leaders Recognize Value of Workforce Development Programs

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Summary of Quotes by Government Officials,
Academics, and Business Leaders

Federally funded workforce development programs, the largest of which are funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), assist individuals in building skills, preparing for work, and finding jobs. Many government officials, academics, and business leaders agree that workforce and training programs are essential for our economy to succeed, especially in this period of slow economic growth. Further, most scholars who have examined the evidence find that these programs are valuable for disadvantaged individuals, businesses, and the economy.

“No economy can succeed without a high-quality workforce, particularly in an age of globalization and technical change. ... Although helping workers acquire up-to-date skills is always important, it is especially critical now, when long spells of unemployment are threatening the longer-term employability and productivity of many.”¹

Ben Bernanke, Ph.D., *American Economist and current Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and former Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers under President George W. Bush*²

“Putting in place and bringing to scale effective workforce programs that strengthen and target skills for growth sectors of the economy is critical to addressing the nation’s long-term unemployment challenge. Without strategic investments in worker training, high rates of unemployment and long-term unemployment will persist, resulting in greater outlays for the government, a reduction in revenues and slower economic growth.”³

U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee

“There are more than two million open jobs in the U.S., in part because employers can't find workers with the advanced manufacturing skills they need. The private sector must quickly form partnerships with community colleges, vocational schools and others to match career training with real-world hiring needs.”⁴

Jeffrey Immelt, *Chairman and CEO of GE and Chairman of the President's Jobs and Competitiveness Council*

Ken Chenault, *Chairman and CEO of American Express Co*

“Workforce and labor market issues ought to be an integral and fundamental part of economic policymaking.”⁵

“It’s hard to think of any economic problem that would not be substantially improved with an effective workforce development system.”⁶

Ray Marshall, Ph.D. *Former U.S. Secretary of Labor under President Carter*⁷

“In this economy, it is essential to have universal, lifelong, funded access to continually upgrade people’s skills with the changing workforce. The rate of change in our workforce... is increasingly getting faster.”⁸

Roberts T. Jones, *U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training under Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush*

“Research has shown that workforce development works, but how we go about it matters. We know that training is more effective if it’s intensive, long-term, and workplace-based, such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships, or internships.”⁹

Demetra Nightingale, Ph.D., *Senior Fellow with the Center on Labor, Human Service and Population at the Urban Institute*

“Many workers, although certainly not all, are also parents, and human capital accumulation is an intergenerational process. Improving the educational and employment prospects for parents in the workforce today may also do the same for their children as they enter the workforce tomorrow.”¹⁰

Katherine Magnuson, Ph.D., *Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Social Work*

“...workforce investments produce widespread benefits for employers and society as a whole. Returns are particularly remarkable given the magnitude and intensity of workforce investments relative to the size and complexity of the barriers they address.”¹¹

Christopher King, Ph.D., *Senior Research Scientist and Director, Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources*

Carolyn Heinrich, Ph.D., *Director of Public Affairs of La Follette School of Public Affairs*

***This is a brief that draws on our May 2011 brief, [“Research Shows the Effectiveness of Workforce Programs: A Fresh Look at the Evidence.”](#)*

¹ Chairman Ben Bernanke, “Challenges for State and Local Governments,” Speech from the 2011 Annual Awards Dinner of the Citizens Budget Commission, New York, New York, March 2, 2011 <http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/bernanke20110302a.htm>

² For a full biography of Ben Bernanke, Ph.D. see: <http://www.federalreserve.gov/aboutthefed/bios/board/bernanke.htm>

³ Joint Economic Committee Chairman Senator Bob Casey’s Staff, “Addressing Long-Term Unemployment After The Great Recession: The Crucial Role Of Workforce Training,” *U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee*, http://jec.senate.gov/public/?a=Files.Serve&File_id=97c2e98e-a791-47fc-a324-6b407948e083.

⁴ Jeffrey Immelt and Ken Chenault, “How We’re Meeting the Job Creation Challenge: The President’s Jobs and Competitiveness Council, comprised of 26 private-sector leaders, is developing ideas that will accelerate job growth and improve America’s competitiveness,” *Wall Street Journal*, 13 June 2011. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304259304576380323311523538.html?KEYWORDS=jobs+council+proposals+obama>

⁵ Ray Marshall, “Developing America’s Workforce: Learning from 40 Years of Policy and Practice to Inform the Next Generation,” min. 12:15, *Center for Law and Social Policy*, part of CLASP’s 40th anniversary policy series, “Policy and Promise for Low-Income People in America,” 09 May 2011, http://www.clasp.org/issues/pages?type=basic_skills_and_workforce_training&id=0004.

⁶ *Ibid.* Min. 46:30.

⁷ For a biography of Ray Marshall, Ph.D. see: <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/directory/faculty/ray-marshall>

⁸ Roberts Jones, “Developing America’s Workforce: Learning from 40 Years of Policy and Practice to Inform the Next Generation,” min. 16:15.

⁹ “Five Questions for Demetra Smith Nightingale on Workforce Development Policy,” *The Urban Institute*, 26 May 2011, <http://www.urban.org/toolkit/fivequestions/Nightingale-Workforce-Development.cfm>.

¹⁰ Katherine Magnuson, “Investing in the adult workforce: An opportunity to improve children’s life chances,” prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation Initiative on Investing in Workforce Development, March 2007, <http://www.aecf.org/news/fes/dec2008/pdf/Magnuson.pdf>.

¹¹ Chris King and Carolyn Heinrich, “How Effective Are Workforce Development Programs? Implications for U.S. Workforce Policies in 2010 and Beyond,” Prepared for the Symposium Celebrating the Ray Marshall Center’s 40th Anniversary, October 19, 2010, <http://www.utexas.edu/research/cshr/pubs/pdf/Heinrich%20and%20King%20-%20How%20Effective%20Are%20Workforce%20Development%20Programs.pdf>