Developing America's Workforce

County Roles, Barriers and Solutions

Counties play a critical role in our nation's workforce development system. Amid a nationwide workforce shortage, many counties are addressing a tight labor market by creating educational and employment pathways for groups who have historically faced barriers to job opportunities. As employers, service providers, conveners and policymakers, counties are ideal partners in preparing residents for the future of work - in both the public and private sector.

To understand workforce development challenges and solutions in action across the country, the National Association of Counties (NACo) interviewed workforce development leaders and elected officials from 14 counties. While barriers and solutions manifest in geographically specific ways, they coalesced in several themes.

Among the issues identified by participating counties, the most common barriers reflect nationwide challenges due to the pandemic, economic transition and the changing workplace, including:

- Transportation
- Housing
- Child care
- Essential (soft) skills
- Immigration status, and
- Funding.

County leaders have a deep understanding of their communities' workforce development needs and assets. By documenting the landscape of workforce development barriers and solutions, NACo empowers county leaders to share knowledge with and replicate solutions from their peers across the country. The resulting systems change efforts can have a transformative impact on millions of students, jobseekers and county residents across the nation.

Top County Strategies for Workforce Development

APPRENTICESHIPS
Apprenticeship models enable jobseekers to simultaneously participate in training while earning an income, breaking down financial barriers to economic mobility.

WRAPAROUND SUPPORT
Linking learners with individualized services beyond job placement (e.g., behavioral health, legal or housing assistance) ensures that participants are best prepared to work.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
Engaging local businesses can provide valuable information on what industries and roles are in demand, and what skills residents need to build and credentials to attain to fill current and future roles.

Scan to read the full report and case studies