



ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports sufficient and sustained funding of programs designed to meet the workforce needs of businesses and the training needs of individuals to ensure competition in all sectors within the global marketplace, particularly in the case of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

RECOMMENDATIONS

PARTNERSHIPS

- Support the federal government partnership with local governments and regions to resolve critical workforce issues.
- Engage directly with local elected officials, who understand the local needs, opportunities, and obligations through their “on-the-ground” perspective.

FUNDING

- Support restoration of funding for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to FY05 levels to provide increased flexibility for state and local officials to establish broad-based labor market systems using federal job training funds for adults, dislocated workers and youth.
- Support the inclusion of “Green Collar” Worker Training Fund for clean energy and “green” workforce development.
- Examine the creation of a workers “GI Bill” to assist workers in financing back to school opportunities as a possible solution to rising unemployment and to the needs of emerging business.

PROGRAM

- Ensure various types of employment and training are operated by the existing local workforce delivery system and managed by the Workforce Investment Boards in partnership with locally elected officials.
- Encourage workforce development opportunities in urban and rural regions alike.
- Promote regional and market-based approaches to worker training through strategic alliances with the private sector, community leaders and academic institutions.
- Urge the expansion of “green job” workforce training and update traditional workforce development programs to train at-risk/underemployed people in emerging energy and environmental skills.
- Support real-time training initiatives.
- Coordinate and align resources between human services, housing and workforce development.
- Utilize the training of the current workforce to determine future sectors for workforce development.
- Encourage regional forums to identify and detail plans to support specific workforce development initiatives.
- Examine establishing a national bipartisan commission to examine workplace flexibility and choice to help determine how the nation’s labor laws and training programs can be modernized to help workers better balance the demands of their job with family life and to enable workers to more easily transition between jobs.

BACKGROUND

A trained, readily available workforce is essential to retain and attract new industries. Regional planning organizations promote regional, market-based approaches to worker training through strategic alliances with the private sector, community leaders and academic institutions; economies of scale; and, opportunities for program replicability. Local elected officials provide strong leadership and sound oversight for workforce programs. Creating and incentivizing a fluid and flexible workforce can assist in a rapidly changing economy and provide both employers and workers new opportunities.