



The Council of State Governments

CSG Healthy States National Task Force Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee

Summary of Meeting Two, Dec. 1 - 2, 2021

The second meeting of The Council of State Governments Healthy States National Task Force – Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee took place during the 2021 CSG National Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Wednesday, Dec. 1 and Thursday, Dec. 2, 2021. The subcommittee explored issues related to **current workforce uncertainties and opportunities** including labor force participation, remote work trends and skill training programs.

“The Workforce of Tomorrow” – Wednesday, Dec. 1

During the Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee’s conference session, **Senator Melissa Hurtado** (subcommittee co-chair) moderated a discussion among National Task Force member **Dr. Charisse Childers (Arkansas Division of Workforce Services)**, **Melissa Johnson (National Skills Coalition)**, **Mary LeFebvre (ACT Inc.)** and **Dr. Reilly White (University of New Mexico)**, regarding the increased necessity for direct, transparent and data-informed conversations around economic and workforce health and creating and circulating information on best practices for combatting economic and workforce challenges posed by the pandemic. A few highlights:

- **Dr. Reilly White** talked about some of the factors behind the national labor shortage. He noted there are approximately 4 million fewer workers now compared with prior to the pandemic, with women and non-college-educated workers being disproportionately reflected in that number. White also highlighted the drastic need for states to support their infrastructure for child care, a large factor in the number of people exiting the workforce.
- **Melissa Johnson** discussed the National Skills Coalition's report "Skills for an Inclusive Economic Recovery," which contains an eight-part policy agenda that both states and the federal government can use to build recovery efforts that include a diverse group of constituencies. One of the main pillars of that report instructs states on how to provide income, health care, training and reemployment support to anyone who loses a job due to economic disruptions like COVID-19 and automation.
- **Dr. Charisse Childers** talked about employment issues in Arkansas related to the mismatch between what employers need and what potential employees want and can provide. During the panel she highlighted that a skills gap as well as a “people gap” was forming prior to the pandemic. Childers also noted employers are experiencing a higher level of frustration than in previous years in Arkansas, and that on the supply side of the labor equation, good jobs are requiring more skills but potential employees feel as if pay is not increasing enough to justify upskilling.



- **Mary Lefebvre** looked specifically at the extremely low labor force participation rate for minority women. She offered that a part of the solution is two-generation reemployment and training strategies. Two-generation strategies create retraining environments that double as educational centers for children. Removing child care barriers for the potential employee and allowing the child to grow alongside the parent is a data-proven strategy for inclusive reemployment. She also mentioned the utility of state-supported, paid apprenticeship opportunities for high school students to maintain strong talent pools in the states.

Next, **Nikhil Gahlawat (LinkedIn)** gave a presentation on remote work trends and what LinkedIn calls “The Great Reshuffle,” which refers to the current employment landscape defined by business leaders and employees who are rethinking their working models, values and opportunities. Highlights from his presentation include:

- The Great Reshuffle is an opportunity for the workplace of tomorrow to build shared values and a common mission to provide more success for organizations and career fulfillment for employees.
- Hiring continues to climb across all industries and job changes are accelerating. Furthermore, migration patterns have shifted, as Gen Z is the most mobile segment of the workforce.
- The majority (71%) of executives have felt pressure to change working models and adapt to allow for greater flexibility. Concurrently, the majority (87%) of employees wish to remain remote most of the time.
- Smaller cities have become remote work havens with the greatest share of job applications for remote jobs coming from these areas.
- Flexibility has become a top priority for employees. Employers that offer more remote jobs are in a good position to attract talent.
- Remote work may have consequences for work-life balance. Finding the right balance matters for retention. Employers’ ability to prioritize employees’ sense of support and engagement is critical to retaining them.

Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee Work Session – Thursday, Dec. 2

Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee members met in a working session on the second day of the 2021 CSG National Conference to discuss the content covered in “The Workforce of Tomorrow” session the previous day, brainstorm policy recommendations for a healthy workforce in light of pandemic challenges and prepare a programming agenda for 2022.

Key themes that emerged from that conversation include the subcommittee’s recognition of:



- A need to re-skill individuals by connecting them with a technical school to meet their needs.
- A need to ensure that rural communities are included in workforce issue conversations.
- A need for vocational training at an early age (K-12).
- The concern with how large employers treat non-white communities, particularly tribal communities.
- The potential for the automation of jobs, such as in the agricultural sector.

Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee Focuses

The Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee discussed the ways the task force could focus its efforts to highlight policy data and state policy examples and consider recommendations for economic and workforce health and success along the following focus areas:

- The opportunity for creating access to skills training for people in rural areas (high-tech apprenticeships, robotics, information technology skills, etc.).
- There is a necessity to examine how to provide students at the high-school level the skills needed to earn an above minimum wage job after graduation. It is necessary to ensure they have the needed skillset upon graduating from high school if they do not plan to attend college. It is essential to ensure students have career choices and a growth mindset and are willing to continuously learn.
- In tribal communities in particular, the focus must be on ensuring there are ways in which small businesses can thrive.
- There is a necessity to upskill and reskill adults without college degrees and adults with degrees but who have skills not effectively matched to employer needs.

Resources

National Skills Coalition

- [Skills for an Inclusive Economic Recovery](#) (Report)
- [Closing Georgia's Skills Gap through Financial Aid](#) (Report)
- [Digital Skills in Pandemic Times: How State Policymakers Can Help Workers and Businesses Adapt in a Changing Economy](#) (Report)



ACT

- [17 Career Pathway Readiness with ACT Researchers Mary LeFebvre and Jeff Steedle](#) (Podcast)

LinkedIn

- ["Remote Work Insights from LinkedIn" Presentation](#) (PowerPoint)

Policy Examples Highlighted by Task Force Members and Partners

- **Arkansas** [Career Pathways](#) is a skills training program designed to help modest-income parents gain workplace skills leading to economic self-sufficiency and reduced reliance on public assistance.
- In **Indiana**, jobseekers can take on reskilling opportunities through the [Advanced Manufacturing \(AMT\) Program](#). The AMT program is a five-semester technical program that integrates both on-the-job training and classroom education, offering the student the opportunity to earn wages and college credit while concurrently earning their diploma.
- During the 2008 recession, **Michigan's** [No Worker Left Behind](#) initiative provided workers with training benefits of up to \$5,000 for two years, impacting over 150,000 workers. At one time, 75% of the state's workforce was involved in some form of job training (compared to 25% nationally). The program was only funded until 2010.
- Residents of **Tennessee** can take advantage of the [Tennessee Reconnect Grant](#), which pays the remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after state and federal financial aid have been applied, virtually making community college free for grant recipients. Students who want to pursue an associate degree, technical degree or technical diploma at a Tennessee community or technical college are eligible.



Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee

- Sen. Melissa Hurtado (co-chair)
- Lt. Gov. Kristen Juras (co-chair)
- Rep. David Bentz, DE
- Rep. Shawn Bordeaux, SD
- Director Charisse Childers, AR
- Lt. Gov. Molly Gray, VT
- Rep. Leon Howard, SC
- Sen. Mary Kunesh, MN
- Sen. Fred Martin, ID
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Contact Information

2021-22 CSG Health States National Task Force

| [Website](#)

| [Email](#)

CSG Staff

Carl Sims
The Council of State Governments
csims@csg.org

Dexter Horne
The Council of State Governments
dhorne@csg.org