



Skillful State Playbook

7 Steps to Building a
Skills-Based Labor Market



About Skillful

Skillful, a non-profit initiative of the Markle Foundation in partnership with the state of Colorado and others, is working to achieve a skills-based labor market to help millions of Americans overcome barriers to obtaining better-paying jobs in today's digital economy. Skillful helps employers achieve the workforce they need by providing data, tools, and resources that enable the adoption of skills-based hiring and training practices. Coaches and digital services enable job seekers to learn what skills are in demand and access training at any stage of their career. At the same time, Skillful aligns employers and educators so that their training programs teach the skills required to succeed in today's economy.

The nature of work in the digital economy is changing. We need a playbook for state leaders to enable their workforce to change with it.

We haven't seen a transformation like this since the Industrial Revolution, when jobs moved from farms to factories.

Technology is demanding new skills. Long-standing occupations are disappearing or changing almost beyond recognition. New innovations and opportunities are turning up everywhere, yet the talent-development system is not preparing people for these opportunities, and the labor market is not connecting capable job seekers, particularly the nearly 70 percent of Americans who lack a college degree, with employers who need skilled workers.

In the current credential-based labor market, workers are struggling to adapt, and employers who are embracing new technology to transform their businesses can't find enough talent to fill open positions. The solution requires a new frame of mind.

Let's build a labor market in which job seekers, employers, and educators focus on the skills required to do a job, and in which there's new flexibility in how those skills are obtained.

This will take leadership and collaboration, and we invite you to join us in deploying the tools, practices, and resources that will bring a skills-based focus to the workforce—helping expand employer talent pools and offer opportunity to all workers, regardless of how they obtain their skills.

This Playbook is where we get started.

Sincerely,

Zoë Baird
CEO and President
Markle Foundation



Here's how we make it happen: The Skillful Theory of Change.

At Skillful, we know that capability isn't merely measured by college degrees or work experience; when we use these proxies for skills, employers forego talent, and skilled workers lose out on opportunity. So *our* job is to help you create a market focused on the skills needed to do *the* job. Together, we will build a skills-based labor market by effecting two great shifts in the status quo:

1. Engaging employers, educators and trainers to help them adopt skills-based practices.
2. Breaking down the traditional barriers between these sectors and helping integrate their efforts to achieve true systems-level change.

Together, we can empower key labor market actors to move toward skills-based practices, providing them with tools and resources to shift their approach. In doing so, we will unlock opportunity for all Americans.

Our focus is on skills, regardless of where or how they're obtained.

Building a skills-based labor market requires a commitment to being:

- **Ecosystem Focused:** Engage with existing players to create a skills-based labor market
- **Skilled-Worker Centric:** Design initiatives to reach and support job seekers who have completed high school but do not have a college degree
- **Evidence Based:** Create and iterate approaches based on research and experience with partners across the labor market
- **Partnership Oriented:** Collaborate with existing players to pursue the fastest, most effective path to change
- **Technology Enabled:** Harness the technologies and data transforming the economy to help companies and workers thrive
- **Locally Supported:** Incorporate local support and human connections to change behaviors

We can help meet the needs of Americans transitioning into great digital-economy jobs. We'll do so by achieving impact across the labor market ecosystem.





**STEP
1**

Align your partners.

Change on this scale takes buy-in from governments, employers, educators, and various segments of the education and workforce system. You already have leaders across all these sectors doing innovative work in your state. Spurring their commitment to skills-based practices can create the systemic change needed to build a skills-based labor market.

This section will help you:

- Map stakeholders across the segments of the ecosystem
- Identify the right leaders to help lead this work
- Consider the barriers that prevent partners within and across segments from working together

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

Skillful Ecosystem Map:

Build your initiative on this foundation, using these key questions to identify barriers and align the right partners to advance skills-based practices.



**STEP
2**

Assess your labor market and identify the hot jobs.

A foundational step in building a skills-based labor market is to understand the drivers of your economy—including identifying growing industries, as well as skilled jobs that are hard to fill. When an economy moves toward skills-based practices, these jobs—which may previously have been inaccessible to many—can provide tremendous opportunity for your residents, especially those without a college degree, who either have or who can get the necessary skills.

In this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a profile of your labor force
- Identify growing industries in your state
- Identify your “Hot Jobs”—opportunities that can offer skilled constituents quality pathways

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

Process Guide:
Develop an economic profile of your state to better understand your population and labor force, as well as growing industries and hot jobs in your state.

Excel Template:
A tool to conduct your labor market analysis.

PowerPoint Template:
This PowerPoint template can help you visualize and present your labor market analysis.

Hot Jobs on Skillful.com:
Once you have identified your Hot Jobs, help your constituents understand them better by sharing key stats. See an example on [Skillful.com](https://www.skillful.com).



STEP 3

Help employers recruit and hire based on competencies.

Support industry intermediaries and businesses in deploying skills-based employment practices for all jobs in your economy—especially those hot jobs that can make a difference to skilled job seekers.

Here, you'll learn how:

- Industry associations, business services groups, and other employer intermediaries can help identify hard-to-fill jobs and create competency models to find the right talent
- Employers can leverage these identified skills and use our skills-based guide to ensure that their recruitment tools are skills-based
- If IT and Advanced Manufacturing are growing industries in your state, Skillful's showcase contains many additional skills-based tools for you to use

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

Identifying Competencies:

Business intermediaries can create competency models that help identify skills needed for various jobs.

Skills-Based Hiring Guide:

Employers can leverage competency models and the techniques in this guide to hire based on skills.

Showcase:

Skillful's work with IT & Advanced Manufacturing Employers in Colorado.

Employer Video:

Watch how one employer put Skillful and skills-based employment practices to work.



**STEP
4**

Help educators and trainers teach based on competencies.

Identifying competencies doesn't just help employers find the right talent—it helps educators and trainers equip students with the right skills to succeed in the workforce. Competency models allow employers, educators and trainers to communicate about the underlying skills needed to fill today's growth jobs, creating a feedback loop that bridges supply and demand. Educators and trainers can use competency models to adapt curricula to teach the skills needed in today's economy.

In this section, you'll learn how:

- Skillful competency models were used to create an entirely new community college curriculum and an accredited course

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

Educator Video:
See how competency models can inform curricula.

Competency Deep Dive:
Explore the Computer User Support Specialist Deep Dive that Aurora Community College used to build a certificate program in Information Technology and Support.



Help job coaches help job seekers.

STEP 5

Career coaches*, the counselors who help job seekers navigate their career journey, are critical to job seeker success, and investing in coaching is one of the surest ways to invest in job seekers. Through our work with career coaches, Skillful has identified a number of ways to help develop coaches so they can support job seekers in a skill-based labor market. Our work has led us to create the Governors’ Coaching Corps and a Community of Practice as key supports for coaches in Colorado.

In this section, you will:

- Learn about professional development programs that Skillful has created for coaches
- Read the insights from 18 months of direct work with career coaches that informed these programs
- Access curated digital tools that your career coaches can use to help job seekers
- Discover questions to consider when exploring investments in your state’s career coaches

* For current purposes, we are using the term coach to refer to individuals who, in their professional capacity, help job seekers navigate their career journey and advance toward a chosen career path by providing strategic guidance and resources and providing them with the support needed to help them persist and advance.

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

Coaching Video:
The power of coaching put to work.

Coaching Insights:
Learnings from Skillful’s first year.

Governor’s Coaching Corps Overview:
Learn about the Coaching Programs informed by our insights in Colorado.

Governor’s Coaching Corps Video:
Watch Governor Hickenlooper launch the program.

Key Questions to Consider when Supporting Coaches:
A few ways to identify the best support for your coaches.

Curated Tools for Career Coaches:
Tools to expand coaching capabilities



STEP 6

Help job seekers make the transition to a skills-based workforce.

Success across the ecosystem depends on reaching job seekers*. We need to equip them with the right resources to understand what skills they have, what skills they need, and how those skills can help them advance in their career.

In this section, you'll find job seeker resources and tools that enable them to:

- See which jobs have the most growth potential
- Understand training options
- Assess their own skills

*We use the term job seeker to refer to all individuals, regardless of employment status, who are pursuing opportunities for training and career advancement.

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

Job Seeker Resources and Tools on Skillful.com:

Helping job seekers discover their strengths, enhance their skills and find the jobs that put it all to work.



STEP 7

Assess your policy levers.

State governments wield many levers that can support skills-based practices, including data, tax incentives, financial aid, and your own hiring practices. Your commitment can help model, incentivize, and scale these practices.

This section highlights:

- Tangible levers you can use to help spread skills-based practices inside and outside government
- Workforce data transparency diagnostics that help advance governments' role in creating a skills-based labor market

TOOLS AND ASSETS:

5 Recommended Actions:
Discover ways that government can spur skills-based practices.

Workforce Data Transparency Guide:
Evaluate your data transparency efforts to see how well you are informing job seekers about quality opportunities.

Thank You to Our Partners



These tools and resources were developed with the support and input of various partners, including:

- Adams County Education Consortium
- Arapahoe Community College
- Bell Creek Consulting
- CareerWise Colorado
- Colorado Business Roundtable
- Community College of Denver
- Community College of Aurora
- Colorado Community College System
- Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Colorado Department of Labor & Employment
- Colorado Mountain College
- Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade
- Colorado Workforce Development Council
- Colorado Technology Association
- Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Emily Griffith Technical College
- Front Range Community College
- Goodwill Industries of Denver
- Governor's Coaching Corps
- Larimer County Workforce Center
- Mi Casa Resource Center
- Mile High United Way
- NOCO Manufacturing Partnership
- Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association
- TalentFound Colorado
- Turing School of Software & Design
- Warren Village

Let's build a labor market that works for everyone.

We want to stay in touch. Contact Skillful CEO Beth Cobert at beth.cobert@markle.org to learn more about Skillful and to share skills-based efforts happening in your state.

Skillful.com

