

ADULT EDUCATION & WORKFORCE TRAINING

INVESTING IN THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF HISPANICS



"Opportunity is who we are. And the defining project of our generation is to restore that promise."

-- Barack Obama, 2014 State of the Union address

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2015 the Hispanic population in the U.S. will have reached 57.1 million, making people of Hispanic origin 18 percent of the nation's population. Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group, and will represent over 70 percent of our nation's population growth between 2015 and 2060.ⁱ

The strength of the American economy is inextricably linked to the strength of the Hispanic workforce. At roughly 24 million, Hispanics represented 16 percent of the U.S. labor force in 2013ⁱⁱ and are expected to grow to 19 percent by 2022.ⁱⁱⁱ

THE NEED

As of May 2015, there were 5.4 million job openings in the U.S. yet 8.3 million people were unemployed.^{iv} Many U.S. employers struggle to find the highly skilled workers they need to compete in the global marketplace.

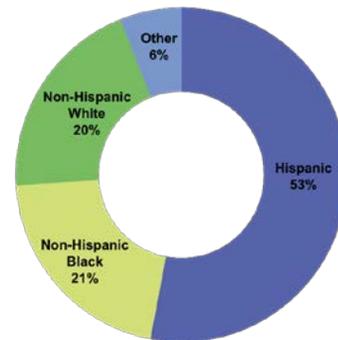
In October 2013, the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and its international partner, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), released the results from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which was administered in English. The PIAAC tested adult skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments and found that 36 million adults have low literacy skills. It was also found that Hispanics are overrepresented in the population that scored at the lowest levels on PIAAC. While Hispanics represent 14 percent of the adults who took the assessment, they comprise 53 percent of those who scored at the lowest level in literacy and 37 percent of those who scored at the lowest level in numeracy.^{vi}

In 2013, OECD released their report, [Time for the U.S. to Reskill? What the Survey of Adult Skills Says](#), which examined the low-skilled U.S. population in more detail. The report found that the basic skills issue affects minority communities in profound ways, in part given the scarcity of resources in high-need areas. This poses a great barrier for these hard working Americans to

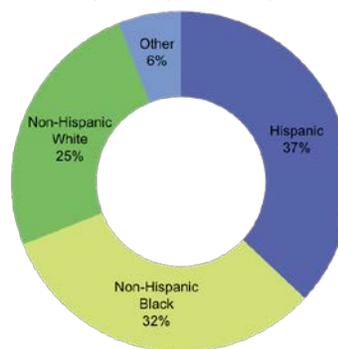
move up the career ladder to better paying jobs that can support their American dream. Furthermore, we risk our global competitiveness if we ignore the call to increase the education and skills of low-skilled adults

Figure 1. More than half of U.S. adults ages 16-65 in the lowest literacy skill level and over one-third in the lowest numeracy skill level were Hispanic: 2012

U.S. Adults With Literacy Below Level 1, by Race/Ethnicity



U.S. Adults With Numeracy Below Level 1, by Race/Ethnicity



THE GOAL

Low-wage, entry-level jobs should be stepping stones to robust career pathways into the middle class. In an effort to eliminate barriers that prevent upward mobility for frontline workers, we need government, businesses, nonprofits and others to invest in collective impact strategies aimed at training our workers with the skills employers need, and matching them to good jobs that need to be filled right now.

THE PLAN

Across the country, federal training programs help hard-working Americans find good jobs and careers, employers recruit and hire the skilled workers they need to compete, and American communities build the skilled workforce they need to attract business investment and create jobs. In July 2014, President Obama signed the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) into law, which strengthens, aligns and improves accountability of Federal employment, education, and training services. At the time WIOA was enacted, the Administration also released [Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity](#) report, a federal-wide effort to ensure that federally funded training programs are singularly focused on getting more Americans - particularly those hardest hit by the twists and turns of global competition, technological changes, economic isolation, or inadequate education opportunities—ready to work with marketable skills. The Report also highlights the need to for public private partnerships, among other initiatives, that target the skills gap disproportionately affecting entry-level workers.

In January 2015, President Obama announced [Upskill America](#), an employer-led movement dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for American workers through education and workforce development. In February 2015, the Department's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) released the report, [Making Skills Everyone's Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the United States](#). The report offers suggestions for how to establish convenient, effective, high-quality learning opportunities for low-skilled youth and adults. Specifically, it offers seven strategies that hold great promise for improving the conditions that create and perpetuate poor literacy, numeracy, and problem solving. These strategies do not partition the responsibilities of the public and private sectors; nor do they compartmentalize actions at the federal, state, regional, tribal, or local levels. These strategies are based on the principle of shared responsibility and acknowledge that America's skills challenge is too large to address by any stakeholder group independently.



PROMISING PRACTICES

The Department, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, is encouraging stakeholders to leverage promising practices and partnerships in order to address the skills gap in their communities. Examples of local communities that are stepping up to address skills challenges in their neighborhood include Texas' *Alamo Area Academies*, an innovative training and educational partnership. They provide education, work experience and job opportunities for high school students seeking to jump-start their futures and make a seamless transition from high school to college and/or to the workplace. Qualified students receive training in high-wage demand occupations, including Aerospace, Advanced Technology and Manufacturing, Information Technology and Health Care sectors, during their junior and senior years of high school. They earn one year of college credits and enjoy paid internships introducing them to careers in key local industries. Participating employers benefit through access to a continuous pipeline of skilled entry-level workers trained to their specifications. Because of the academies' great success, local industries have agreed to provide hiring preference to successful interns after they graduate.

Another example is *Carreras en Salud*, a bilingual healthcare partnership based in Chicago, IL. *Carreras en Salud* is a collaborative career pathways program established to bridge limited English-proficient individuals into Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN), and Registered Nurse (RN) positions. The partnership between Instituto del Progreso Latino, Association House of Chicago, Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) of Wilbur Wright College and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) is a demonstration of the impact that community-based organizations, local colleges, and policy advocates can have on local initiatives.

For more information, visit:

www.ed.gov/hispanicinitiative

White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/index.html>

U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education

<http://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>

U.S. Department of Labor

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, original analysis of 2012 National Population Projections, Table 4. Projections of the Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2015 to 2060. <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2012/summarytables.html>
² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2013. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsrace2013.pdf>
³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Projections to 2022: the Labor Force Participation Rate Continues to Fall, December 2013. <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2013/article/labor-force-projections-to-2022-the-labor-force-participation-rate-continues-to-fall.htm>
⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, May 2015. <http://www.bls.gov/jlt/>
⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation Summary, June 2015. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/emp/sit.nr0.htm>
⁶ Time for the U.S. to Reskill? What the Survey of Adult Skills Says. http://skills.oecd.org/Survey_of_Adult_Skills_US.pdf