

## Workforce System Strategies

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## The New Landscape of Digital Literacy

Resource

This report illustrates the demand for digital literacy skills and their consequences. The report contains data on the lack of digital literacy within the current workforce, where digital skill gaps occur across industries and occupations, and how digital skill gaps affect worker earnings and business competitiveness. The report also presents findings of digital skill gaps by demographic groups to include age, sex, and race.

The U.S. labor market reflects a growing demand for workers across industries to have strong digital skills. This report uses data from a rigorously designed international assessment to analyze workers' current level of digital skills, providing a breakdown of how skills differ among workers in major industries and occupations as well as demographic categories. Next, it provides a short summary of recommendations for how

policymakers and business leaders can invest in upskilling to ensure that all workers have the resilience needed to respond to the continuing transformation of jobs in the U.S. labor market and to acquire new digital skills as necessary.

Policymakers, business leaders, educators, and workforce advocates can use the information provided in this brief to inform their efforts to upskill America’s workers and equip employers with the skilled workforce they need. In particular, since existing education models may not equip workers with all of the skills they need to succeed in the digital economy, policymakers should support public-private training partnerships, invest dedicated funds in digital upskilling efforts, and identify incentives to advance short-term and nontraditional training and education programs that respond to jobseeker and employer needs for rapid upskilling in the wake of the pandemic and beyond.

### MAJOR FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Key steps that policymakers should take include:

- Embedding digital literacy and problem-solving skills as allowable or required activities under existing workforce development, adult education, and higher education policies.
- Investing in new Digital Literacy Upskilling grants to expand access to high-quality digital skills instruction that meets industry and worker needs. These dedicated investments are necessary to ensure sufficient attention is paid to digital skill-building in the face of numerous competing priorities. Grants should support states in developing and implementing programs that embed digital literacy skills as part of broader occupational skills training, integrated education and training, and other accelerated learning strategies.
- Incentivizing private investment in digital skills training, instruction, and upskilling opportunities for incumbent workers by expanding the scope of existing tax policies like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to allow employers to provide essential upskilling opportunities, both in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and over the longer term.

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