BUSINESS LEADERS UNITED
FOR WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS

Navigating the Federal Workforce Landscape: Past, Present and Future

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October 1 2026

Our vision

- Jobs that require skills training are the backbone of our economy.

- National Skills Coalition fights for a national commitment to high-quality skills training so that more people have access to a better life, and more local businesses see sustained growth.

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OUR NETWORKS



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Goals for today

- Gain a historical context of where workforce has been in the past
- Understanding of the current climate for workforce policy
- Knowledge of what “may” be next and what to consider as we prepare for that future landscape



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A little bit about me

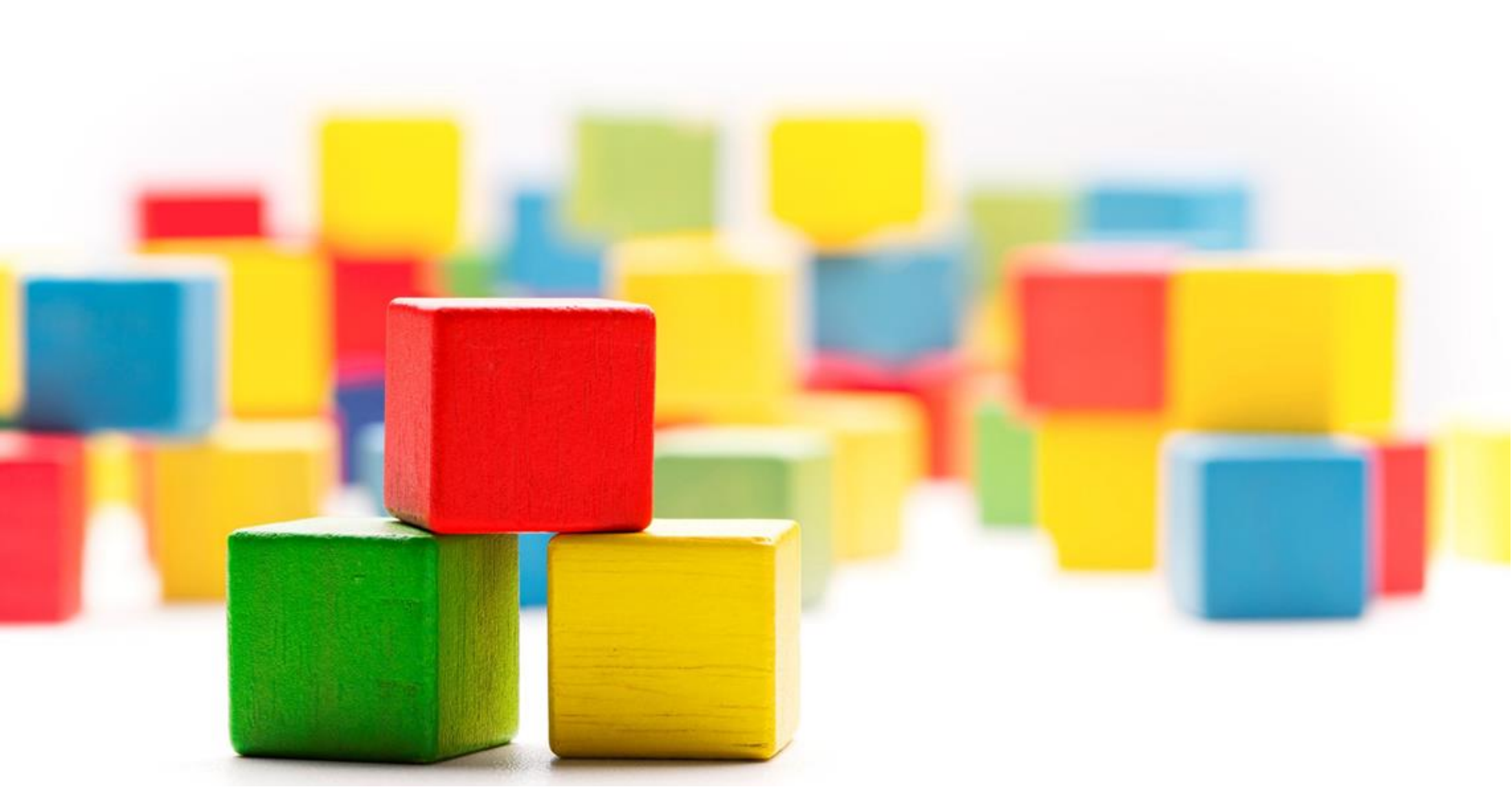












Let’s talk investments in workforce and education programs in the United States

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A little historical context

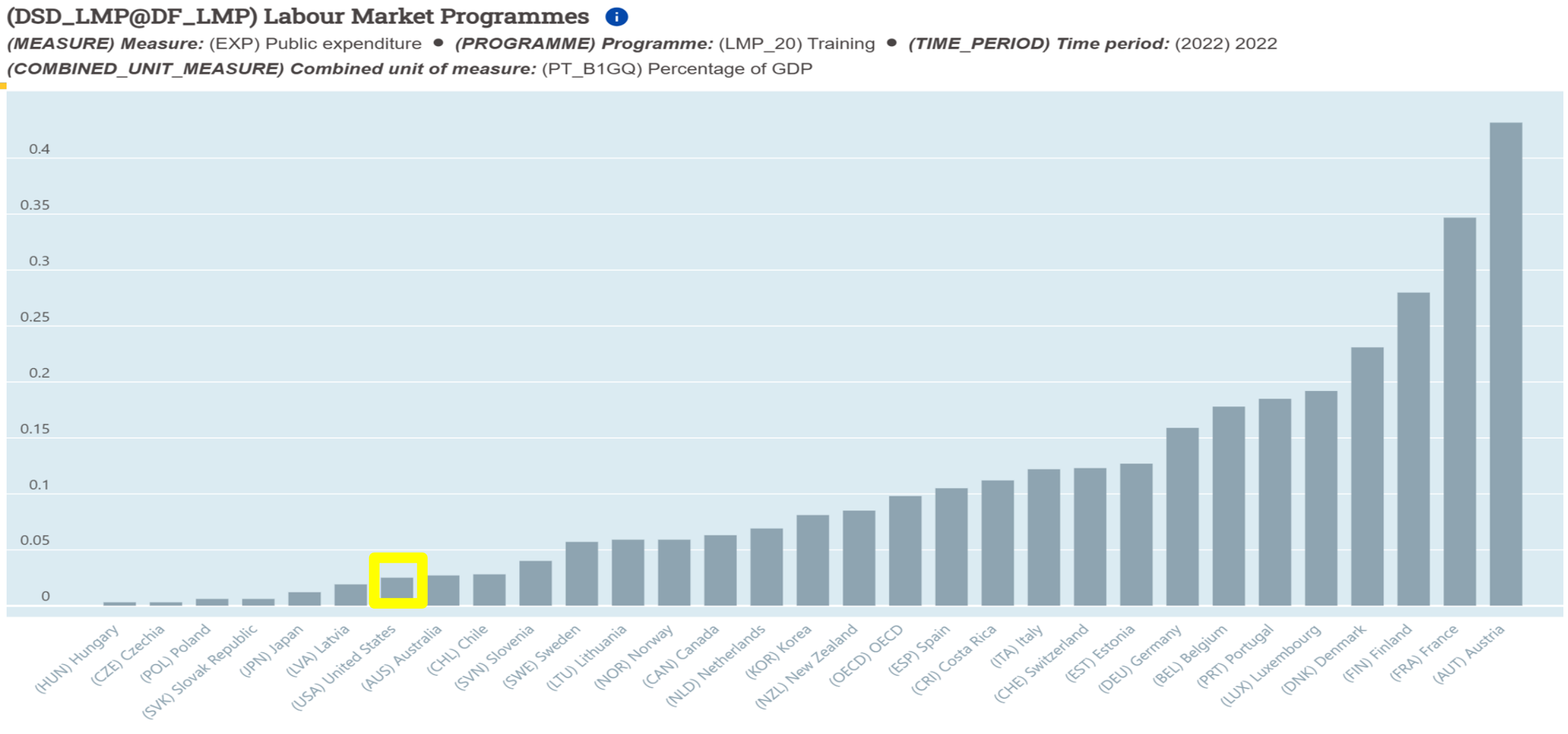
Modern federal workforce programs began as part of **War on Poverty** undertaken by President Lyndon B. Johnson. They have included:

- Manpower Development and Training Act (1962-1973)
- Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (1973-1982)
- Job Training Partnership Act (1982-1998)
- Workforce Investment Act (1998-2014)
- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** (2014-present)

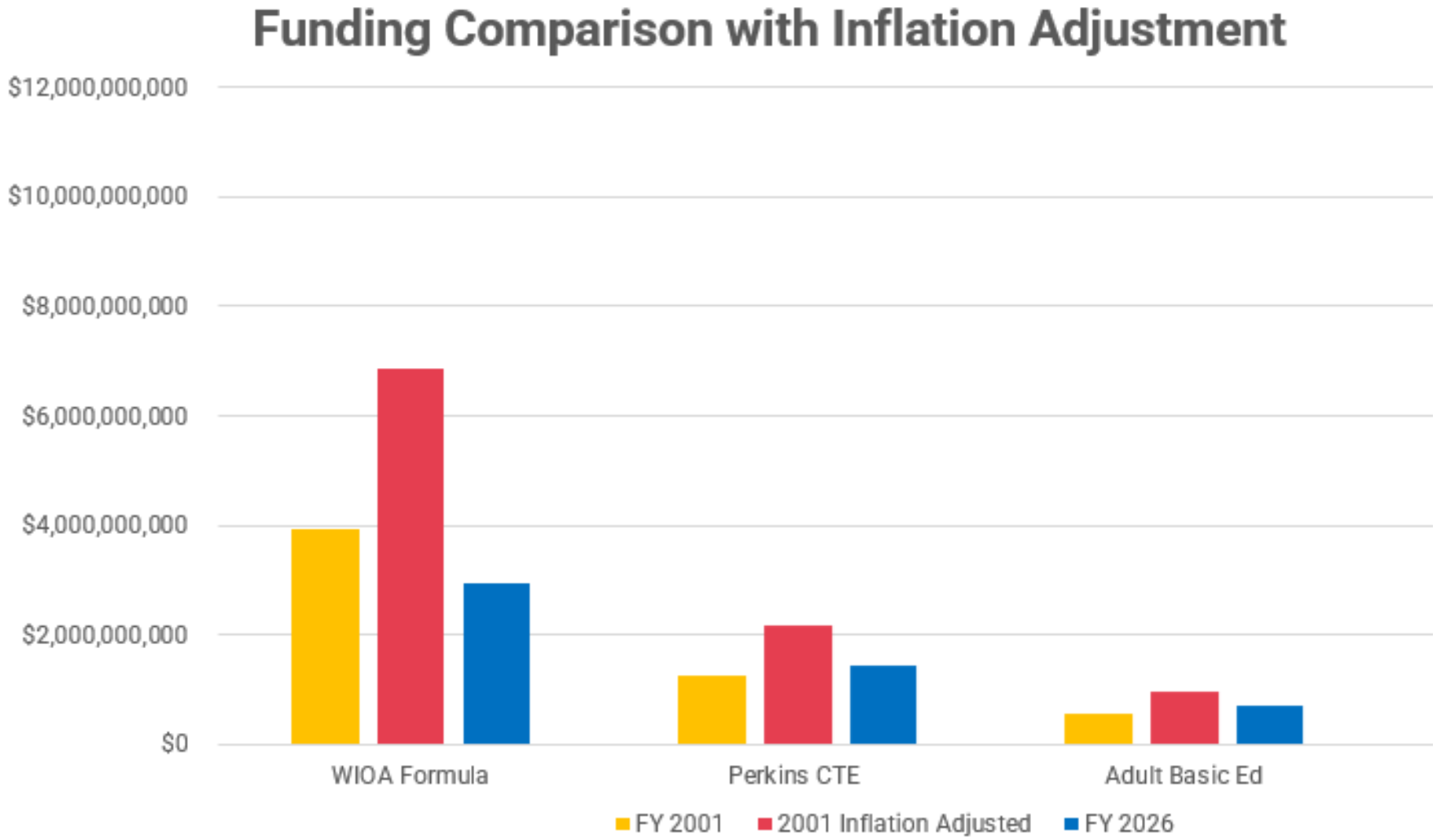
CETA represents the **"high-water mark"** for federal investment, with funding of **$18 billion** (in today's dollars) in 1979.*

*Source: Harry Holzer, Going, Going…Gone? The Evolution of Workforce Development Programs for the Poor Since the War on Poverty. Viewable at: http://npc.umich.edu/news/events/war-on-poverty-june-conference/holzer.pdf

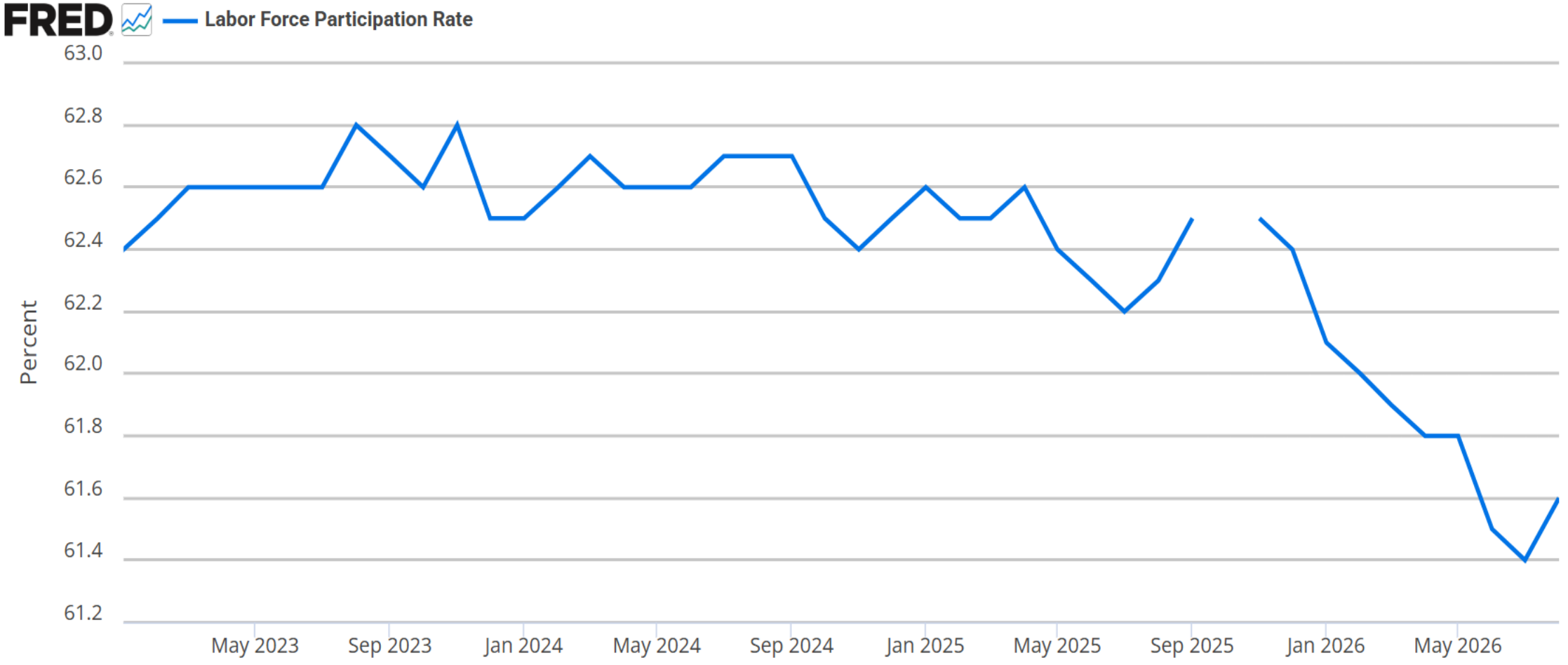
The US invests much less in workforce compared to other nations



Federal investments have been nearly flat for over two decades



More retirements are occurring causing lower labor force participation



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via FRED®

fred.stlouisfed.org

Fullscreen



Lack of investments in the US plus low labor force participation means employers are facing many challenges filling their talent pipelines

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This is all happening at the same time Administration changes are coming and disinvestments in workforce are happening in Congress.

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Administration’s priorities

America's Talent Strategy

- A **significant focus** on industry partnerships
- Recognition of importance of **incumbent worker** training
- **Emphasis on apprenticeship** and work-based learning opportunities, including pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Understanding that education and training cannot occur without **wrap around support** (childcare, transportation, etc.)

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Administration actions focused on:

- **Reshoring manufacturing** and building the skilled labor workforce
- Keen eye to automation & **AI**
- Executive orders focused on getting to **1 million apprentices**
- **Flexibility** and barrier removal through waiver processes
- Getting away from a **college for all mentality**
- Commitment to **oversight and accountability**

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But we aren’t wrapping this conversation up yet because we have Congress too…

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In early July 2025, Congress passed the **budget reconciliation** legislation ("One Big Beautiful Bill Act," or OBBA).

This legislation ***did NOT directly affect workforce and education funding***, but has affected many learners via:

- Cuts to Medicaid and SNAP benefits
- Changes to Child Tax Credit
- Increased immigration enforcement funding
- Changes to Pell Grants
- Changes to federal student financial aid

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Workforce Pell

- **Decades of advocacy** to get to this
- **Expands Pell Grant eligibility** to short-term, high-quality programs
- This is in the **past, present and future** conversations as we continue to monitor how this plays out in states

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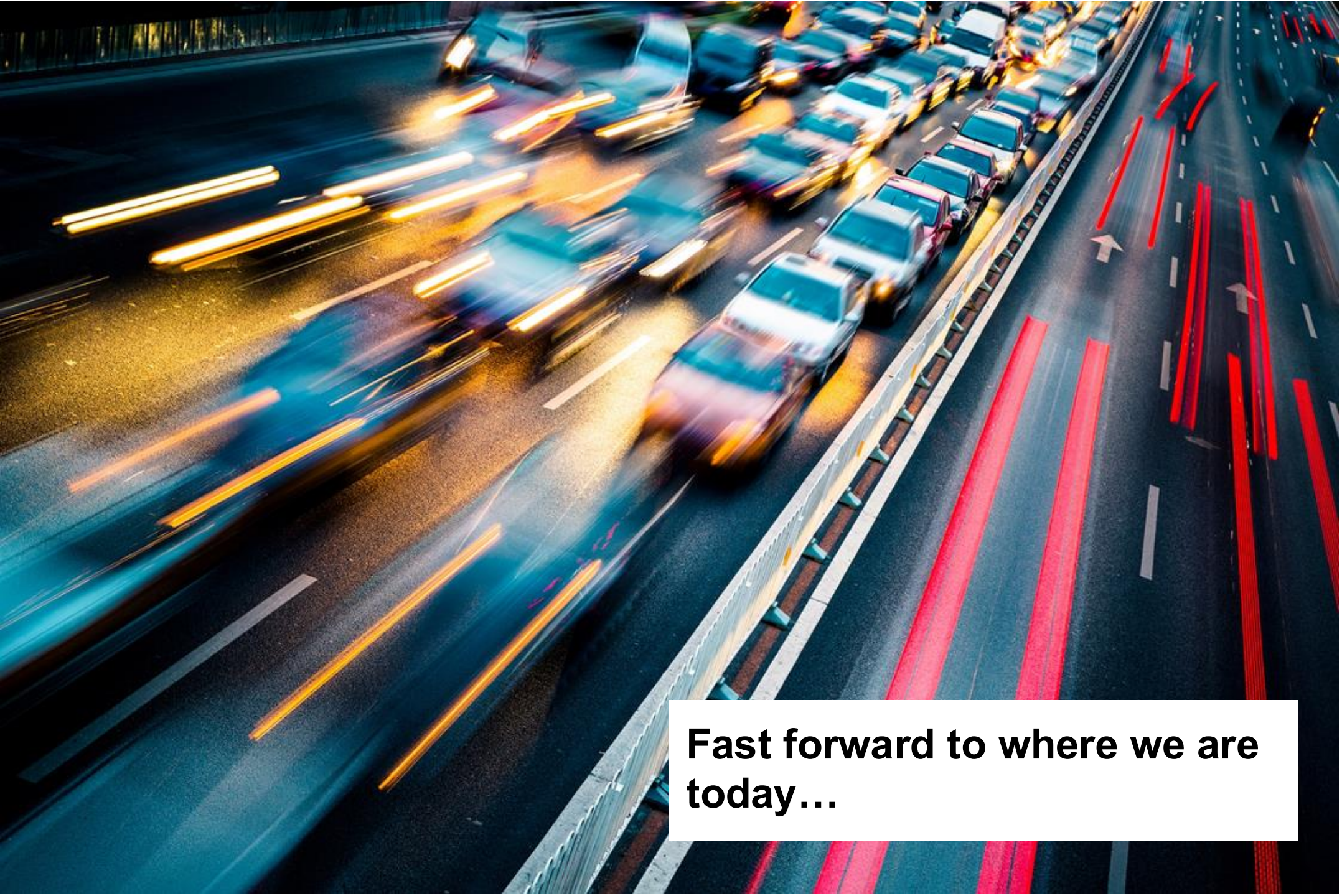
2026 Appropriations

- Both the **President's budget and the House** appropriations bill sought to make significant cuts to workforce

- **In the end the FY26 levels largely stayed the same as FY24**

- There were some slight increases in **apprenticeship funding** and **career technical education**

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Fast forward to where we are today…

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Present day landscape

OMB Proposed rulemaking on federal grants is looming



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FY27 appropriations CR pushes the appropriations process until December 11

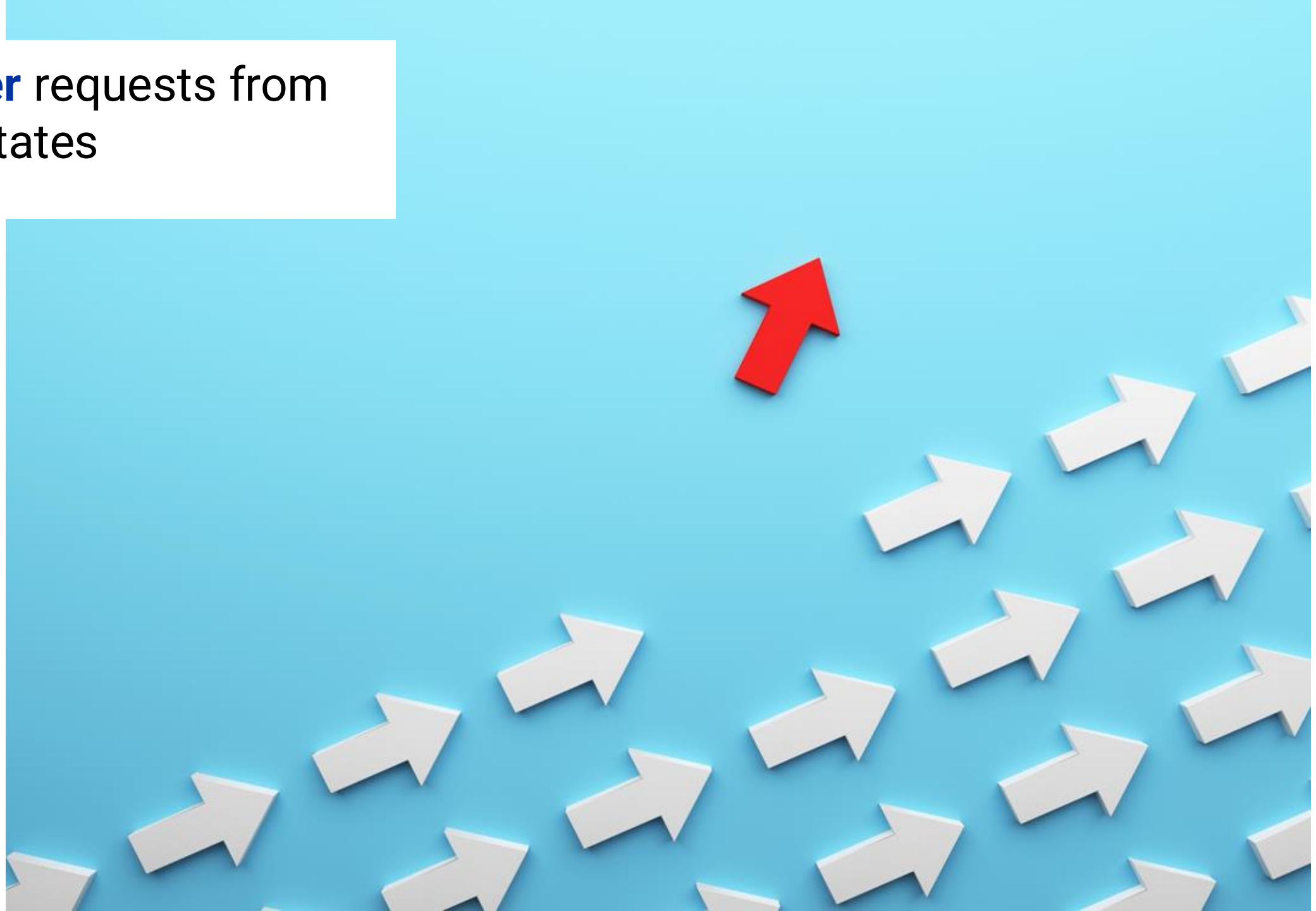




Many **legislative bills around data** have been introduced in both the House and Senate

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WIOA waiver requests from almost all states

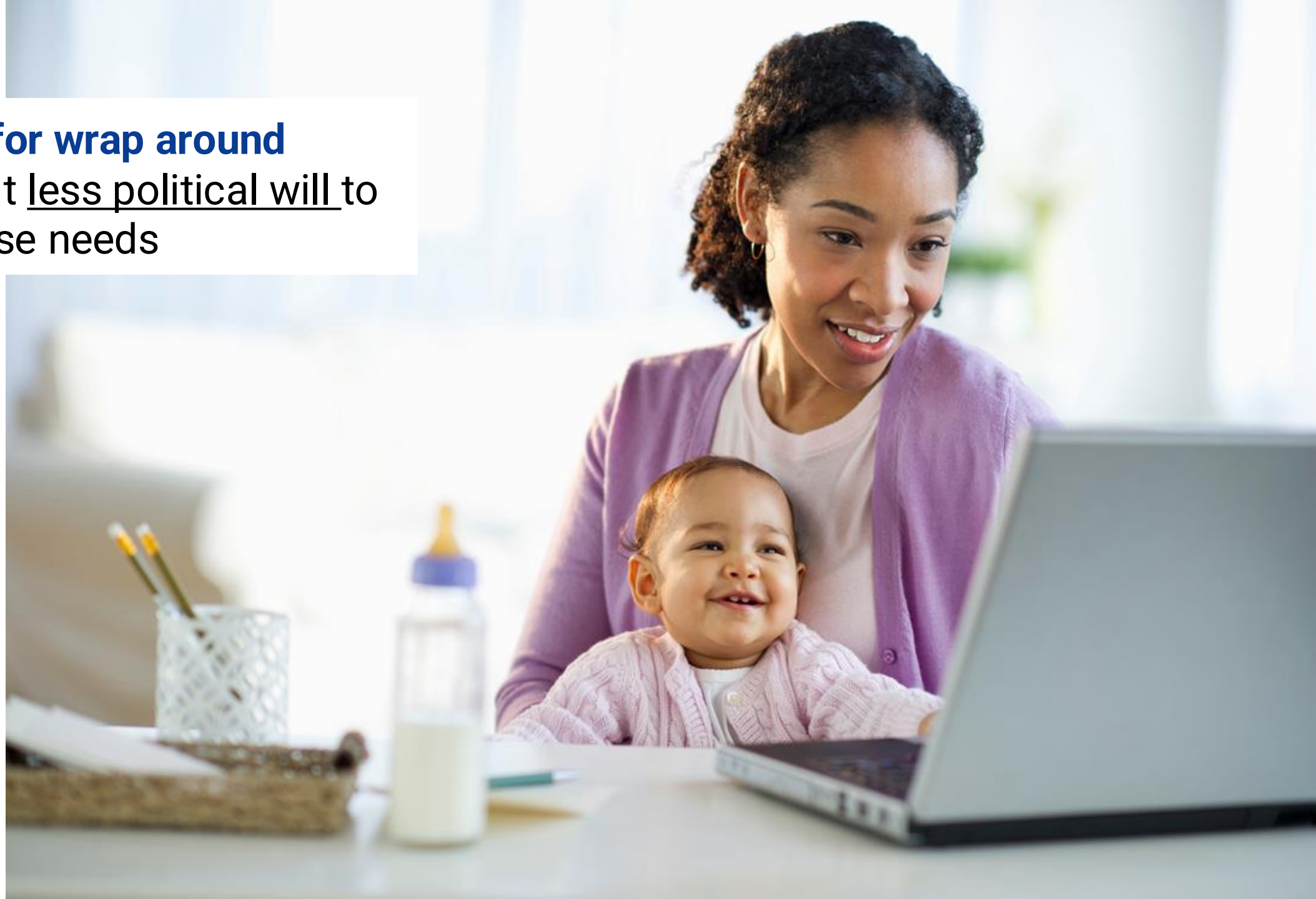




Shifting perspectives on the **value of college**

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More **need for wrap around supports** but less political will to support those needs



Future landscape of workforce

Future landscape of workforce:

- **Focus on state level** workforce changes even in tight budget cycles
- **Tough fight for Congress** to pass FY27 appropriations after a mid-term that could potentially change the makeup of the House and Senate
- Potential **new chairs with new priorities** overseeing education and workforce
- **Need for reauthorization** on several large education and workforce programs

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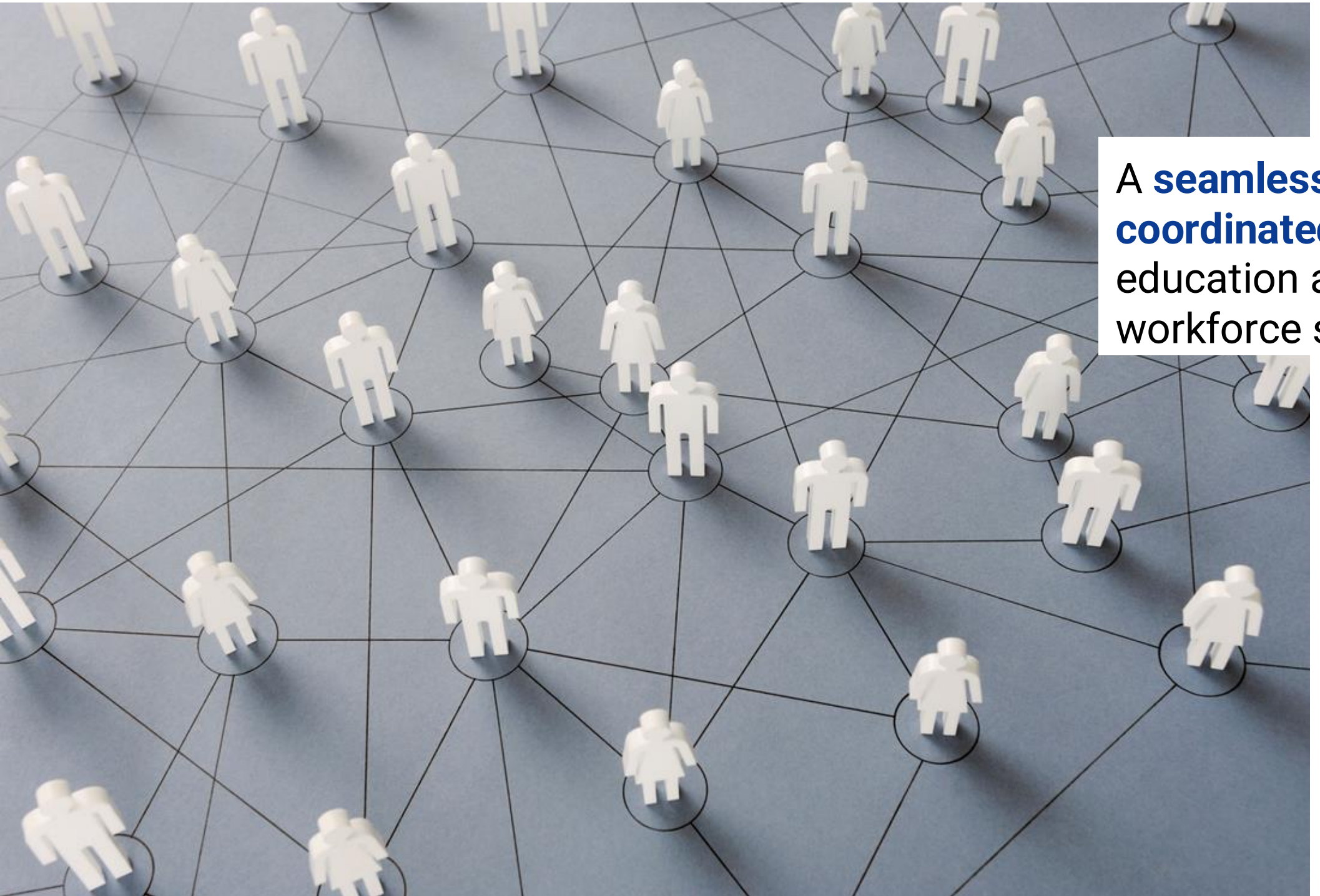
A NEW PROMISE OF WORK

NSC's **New Promise of Work Campaign** is a national initiative that brings together workers, students, businesses, advocates, practitioners, & policymakers to advance a bold new workforce vision—**one where everyone has a fair shot at real economic opportunity**.

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As this campaign pushes us to re-imagine workforce we **asked employers** what they might **want in the future**. Here's what they shared:



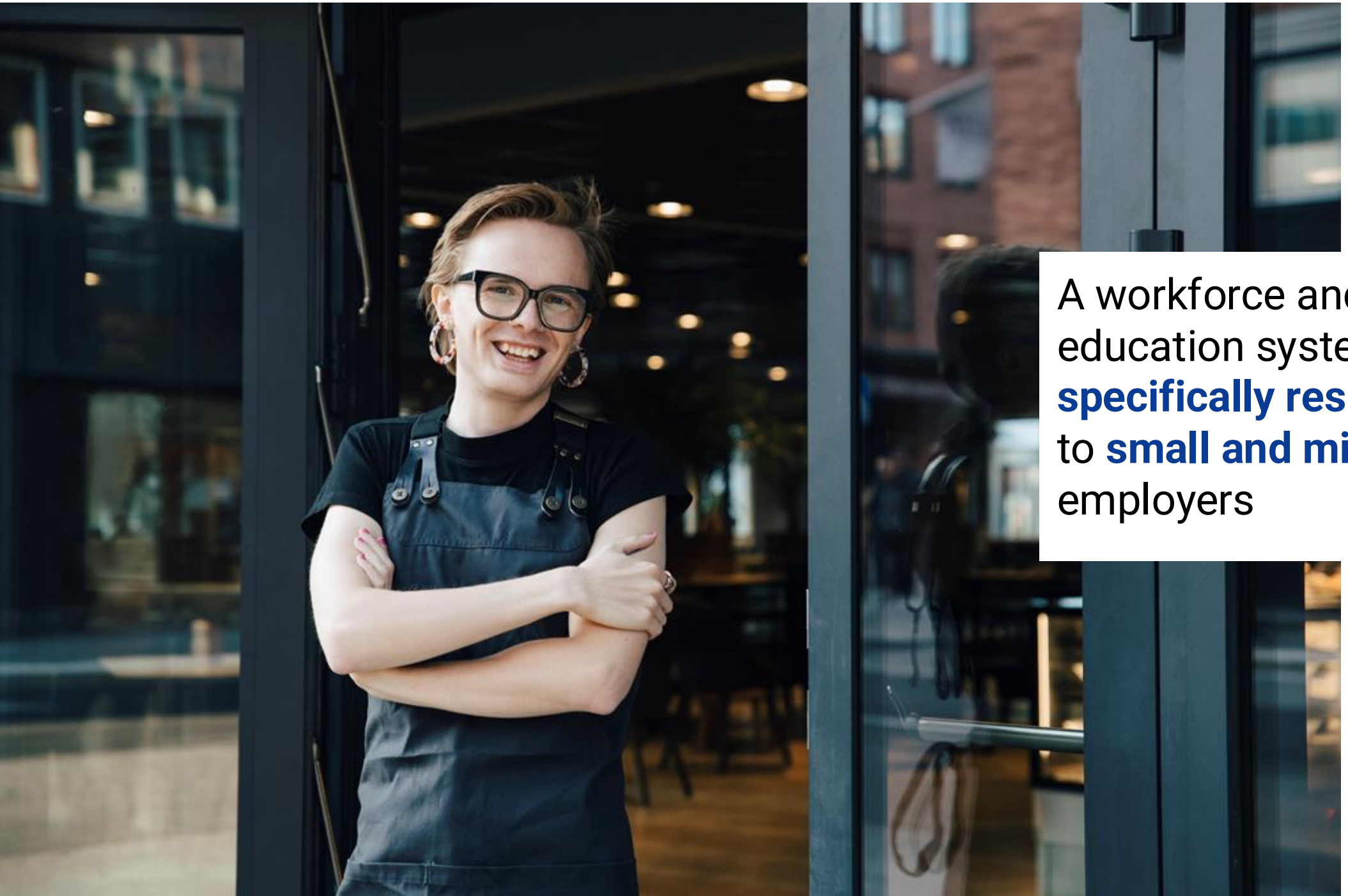


A **seamless and coordinated** education and workforce system

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Robust and effective intermediary organizations





A workforce and education system that is **specifically responsive** to **small and mid sized** employers

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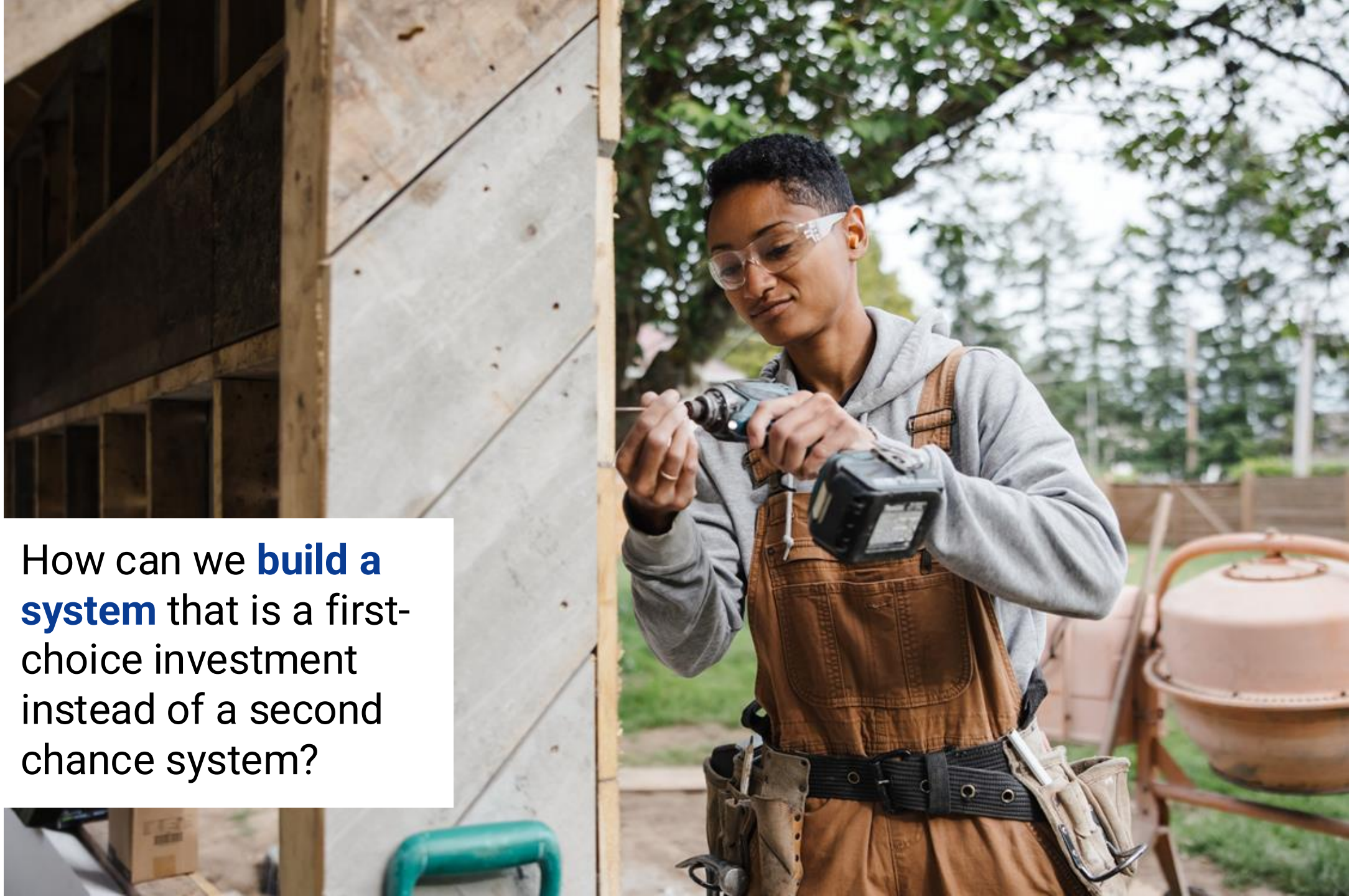
Stronger data systems that are both cohesive and effective



Things to consider

What does it mean to more **clearly define** workforce development?



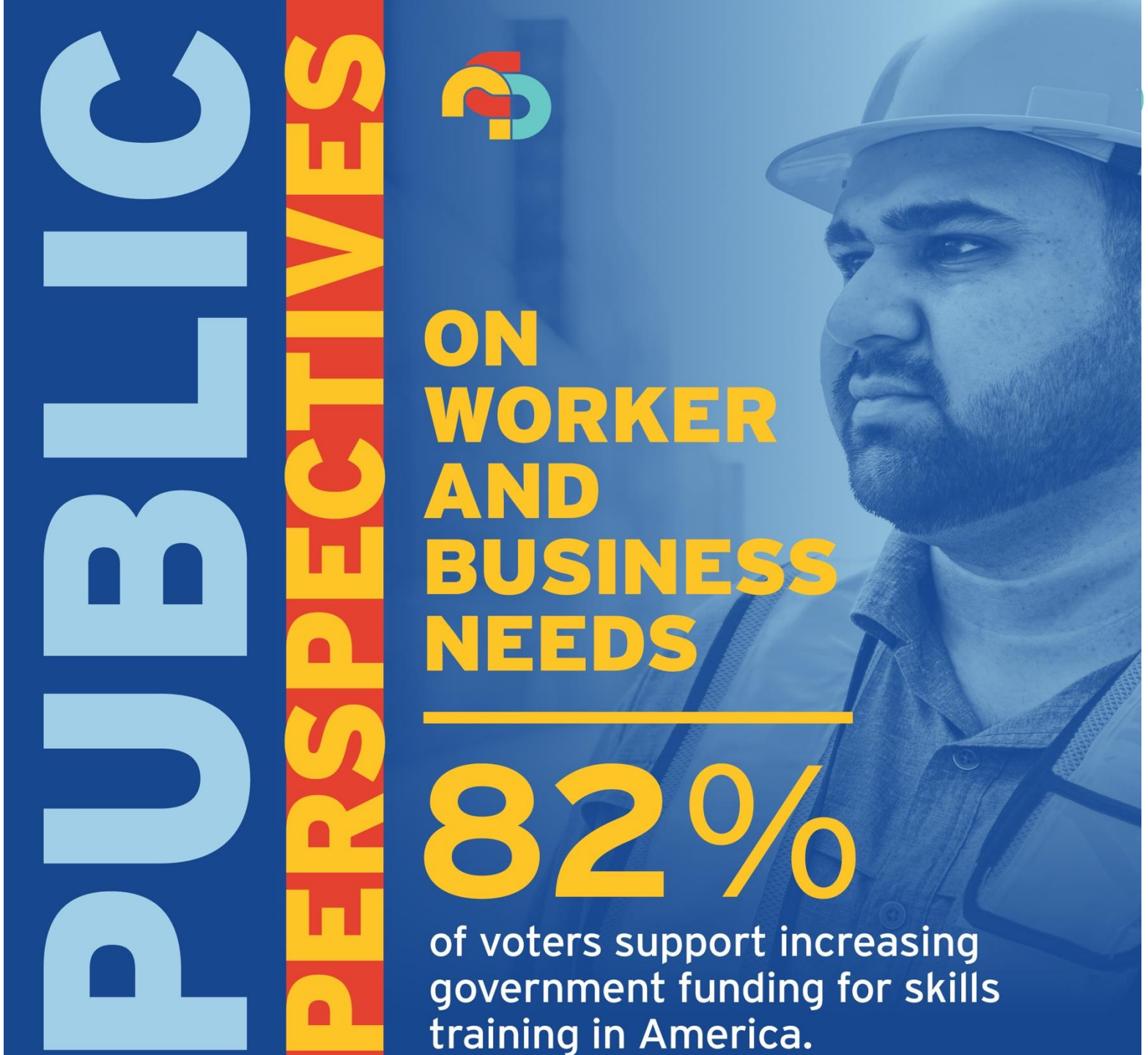


How can we **build a system** that is a first-choice investment instead of a second chance system?

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Workforce investments are:

1. **Bipartisan**
2. **Supported by the public.**



What can you do next?

Actionable next steps

1. **Continue to raise your voice to educate policymakers** about the value of workforce programs in your county and the impacts of the shutdown on your work

2. **Stay tuned into the NSC and BLU network** to be up to date on federal legislation that impacts your local or state workforce.

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Questions?

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