

• **READYNATION**

REPORT | APRIL 24, 2019

## Build a Better Workforce in Illinois

Early learning investments lay a crucial foundation for skills development

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APRIL 27, 2016

### Illinois' STEM Workforce Starts with Early Education

Report

In Illinois, only one-fourth of entering kindergarteners demonstrate school readiness in three assessed areas that are critical for their success: math, literacy and language, and social-emotional development. These readiness gaps can cause kids to fall behind early on and struggle to catch up throughout their years of schooling. These gaps can persist as a child grows up and enters the workforce. It's no wonder why employers across sectors note increasing trouble finding qualified candidates with both the technical skills relevant to their field and non-technical, social-emotional skills such as organization, time management, and communication.

A [new report from ReadyNation Illinois](#) notes that, as global competition for business and job candidates increases, it is apparent that we must do a better job of building the skills that the 21st-century economy demands. All skill-building must start with a solid foundation, and this means investing in our kids early on. We cannot afford to do otherwise: The lack of high-quality infant-and-toddler child care, alone, costs the United States a total of \$57 billion each year, borne by parents, employers, and taxpayers. In Illinois, those annual costs approach \$2.4 billion. The benefits of high-quality early childhood education are innumerable: higher achievement in elementary and middle school, increased likelihood of graduating from high school, stronger chances of earning a college degree, and greater likelihood of attaining full-time employment, amongst others.



“Investing in our youngest members of society today means investing in more productive members of society in the future. For our country and state to better serve communities, build a strong economy, and compete in the global marketplace, we must increase investments in solutions that make high-quality early learning accessible and attainable for all children whose parents seek it,” explains Yvonne Invergo, President & CEO, Lombard Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry.