



FUTURE READY IOWA ALLIANCE PRIORITIZED DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating opportunities for more Iowans to have great careers and employers to hire the skilled workers they need to grow is critical. That's what is behind the Future Ready Iowa goal of 70 percent of our workforce having education or training beyond high school by the year 2025. Below are the Future Ready Iowa Alliance draft recommendations for how to achieve the 70 percent goal by encouraging more Iowans to earn degrees and other postsecondary credentials leading to high-demand jobs, and how to strengthen Iowa's talent pipeline longer term.

1. The Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Grant Program.

- a. The Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship is for Iowans seeking postsecondary credentials up to associate degrees in approved programs at Iowa public and private colleges and universities.

Approved programs of study must lead to high-demand jobs designated by the State Workforce Board.

At community colleges the scholarship will cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees after applying gifts and non-repayable financial aid, such as federal, state, college, foundation and employer assistance. Tuition and fees moving forward will be set at 2017-18 levels, with a cost-adjustment factor.

At other Iowa higher education institutions offering postsecondary credentials up to associate degrees, the scholarship amount will be determined after applying gifts and non-repayable financial aid, with the scholarship capped in some way to be commensurate with community colleges.

For low-income Iowans, if the federal Pell grant fully covers or almost fully covers the cost of tuition and mandatory fees, the goal is to provide an additional stipend to help meet other education-related expenses, depending on individual circumstances and need.

High school graduates enrolling in the fall after graduation must attend full-time and may take five semesters to complete an approved program of study. Other adults may attend full- or part-time within allowed program completion time. Scholars will be encouraged to work with a volunteer mentor.

Recipients cannot currently be enrolled in college, or have been enrolled for at least one year.

An extensive community outreach effort will be part of this initiative, with a focus on low-income Iowans, Iowans who are members of underrepresented minority groups, Iowans with disabilities, refugees, first-generation college students and ex-offenders. This includes asking businesses, nonprofit organizations and others to help find mentors for scholarship recipients. Communities also will be asked to help find part-time employment for recipients who need to work in their field of study.

- b. The Future Ready Iowa Grant is for Iowans seeking a bachelor's degree who have earned more than half the credits in approved majors leading to high-demand jobs. The grant will be a set amount of money. Indiana's grant, for example, is \$1,000 a year for qualified working adults. Iowa's grant would be available for two years for full-time students or pro-rated for up to four years for part-time students.

Recipients cannot currently be enrolled in college, or have been enrolled for at least one year.

All grant recipients will be encouraged to work with a volunteer mentor. Communities will be asked to help find part-time employment for recipients who need to work in their field of study.

- c. The Iowa Employer Innovation Fund will offer options to encourage individual employers - or community partnerships made up of employers, educators, economic developers, chambers of commerce, nonprofit organizations and others - to invest to enhance the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Grant Program to strengthen the regional workforce talent pipeline.

Options in the Iowa Employer Innovation Fund with a possible state cost-share could include:

- Establish Future Ready Iowa Internships to expand work-based learning. This would build on two state programs with high demand. Few community college students currently participate.
- Increase the number of Future Ready Iowa Scholarship and Grants. Funders would designate higher education institutions and programs of study/majors leading to regional high-demand jobs.
- Offer high schools performance-based bonuses when students earn industry-recognized credentials that employers need.
- Establish a Future Ready Iowa Enhancement Fund with extra funding for books, tools and other needs for scholarship and grant recipients whose career interests align with regional workforce needs.

2. **Better align and expand the ecosystem of support for Iowans beginning college or career training or returning to complete, with a focus on Iowans who are low income and/or underrepresented minorities. This should include career counseling, addressing the cliff effect (low-income Iowans losing benefits, such as child care assistance, disproportionately due to a small wage increase) and other wrap-around services, such as:**

- a. You Can Go Back Iowa - Develop a program to inspire adults to return to college or complete certification in a high-demand skills area.

Several states have a degree/certificate granting entity that can be thought of as a college without a campus. In New York, this is the Empire State College (www.esc.edu), and in New Jersey, it is Thomas Edison State University (www.tesu.edu). These organizations serve students (typically over age 25) with college credit from a variety of sources (i.e. various colleges, online, competency-based, certain types of advanced professional/technical/military training, etc.) and create order out of chaos. Through intense advising and program planning they set the student on a course to complete a degree or certificate by adding to the mix some potential credit for life/professional experience, as well as additional courses that can be taken at various institutions conveniently available to the student. Institutions work by organizing the various resources around the student, rather than adapting the student to the organization of a single college. Intensive screening and ongoing support are essential to ensure completion.

- b. A fully-integrated career support system that connects the statewide system of human services, workforce development, education and training providers, and community-based organizations.
 - c. Improving remediation, including (1) remedial coursework in high schools, rather than at community colleges. Let students to improve their skills in condensed periods rather than re-taking entire courses; and (2) improve remediation at the postsecondary level with a co-requisite approach.
- 3. Expand high-quality work-based learning experiences in high-demand fields and careers for all students, particularly traditionally underrepresented students.**
- a. Increase K-12 quality pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, internships and other employer-driven work-based learning programs that bridge to postsecondary opportunities. This should include expanded summer youth programs.
 - b. Business professionals and teachers design authentic hands-on work-based learning to create more connections between school and employers for both students and teachers (teacher externships – improve specific content knowledge, such as math).
 - c. Leverage current examples, including the Governor’s STEM Advisory Council Program called Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers, and work-based learning intermediary networks.
 - d. Ensure equity in access across Iowa, in urban and rural areas and all grades through a statewide clearinghouse of work-based learning experiences when local partnerships are unavailable.
 - e. Explore the need for additional funding for expanding work-based learning opportunities.
 - f. School counselors should be trained in career development. Remove non-counseling duties to increase time and focus on career development with K-12 students.
 - g. At every opportunity, integrate employability skills/non-cognitive skills/social-emotional learning.
- 4. Identify and scale effective early academic and career development and delivery approaches so all students are prepared for a changing world.**
- a. Focus on high-quality instruction based on Iowa’s academic standards (which include both content and 21st century skills like critical thinking, problem solving, writing and communication), especially for high-need and underserved students, and on closing achievement gaps.
 - b. Bolster the 21st century skills component of Iowa’s state academic standards to encourage teachers to incorporate career information into the classroom.
 - c. Expand volunteer mentoring, after-school programs and other initiatives designed to support disadvantaged students with emphasis on high-demand career exploration and development.
 - d. Utilize Iowa’s new College and Career Readiness definition, which is a roadmap for meeting the Future Ready Iowa goal. This is important to ensure early awareness of career choices and sustainability of the Future Ready Iowa plan beyond 2025.

- e. Support the implementation of House File 2392, which focuses on effective career and academic planning; high-quality career-technical education instruction; and regional partnerships.
 - f. Maximize and further expand dual credit/concurrent enrollment opportunities including year-round as part of the overall career pathway.
- 5. Develop a grassroots strategy to engage the business community, sector boards, regional workforce boards, STEM regions and other regional collaborations to align with Alliance recommendations.**
- a. Create an asset map of existing regional and local public-private workforce partnerships.
 - b. Determine if gaps exist where guidance could be provided to a community or region to assist in the development of a collaborative approach toward workforce initiatives.
 - c. Develop a playbook for the business community to support and engage with the development and/or scaling of sector strategies or other business-community boards.
 - i. Ensure playbook includes models and best practices for rural businesses.
 - ii. Ensure playbook includes models of best practices to strengthen relationships between businesses and education and build new and expand existing career pathways.
 - d. Design successful strategies, including:
 - i. Discuss and regionally validate and/or customize existing labor market data on current and emerging jobs and the skills and credentials needed to obtain those jobs, including: Labor Market Information shared to include: top occupations, laborshed data, wage data, educational outcome data (supply of programs, student enrollment, graduates, etc.).
 - ii. Identify challenges the business community has in attracting and retaining a qualified workforce, including “soft-skill” challenges, and engage in collaborative solutions.
 - iii. Determine how to best leverage existing solutions such as career pathway development and training, work-based learning experiences, internships, apprenticeships, and K-12 career exposure opportunities.
 - iv. Utilize local, state, and federal programs that already exist to support challenges identified.
 - e. Support successful work or operations of existing business-community collaborative. Technical assistance for existing or future sector partnerships and other public private partnerships will be provided by the Department of Education, local workforce investment boards, and other relevant partners depending on the strategy selected.

Potential types of technical assistance may include: providing private sector with necessary partner to “lead” board; conducting research on solutions/issues at request of sector group; marketing and sharing relevant labor-market data including local occupational outlook data; recruiting the private sector to participate where gaps exist; inviting supporting entities to participate based on issues identified by employers; sharing statewide best practices and success stories; serving as catalyst or engage a catalyst where public-private workforce partnerships do not exist.